

THREE WEEKS

AT

FLADONG'S.

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Fladong's.

A NOVEL.

BY A LATE VISITANT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

A race of youthful and unhandled colts,
Fetching mad bounds——

SHAKESPEARE.

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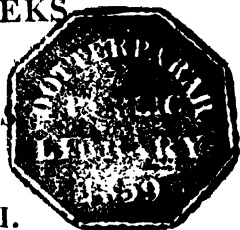
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CHAP. VII.



Sir Henry Priapus determines to quarrel and fight with Kincat by deputy—Fribble is nominated his locum tenens.—The embarrassment of Fribble, who is very much indisposed to take upon himself the honor—his scruples overcome, after a strong contest between his cowardice and his interest—his second, Colonel Cunningglance—The challenge—the arrangements completed.—The meeting and the unexpected issue of consequences, which, at first view, threatened to be fatal in their termination.

AFTER the impression of the moment had subsided, Kincat had never given a thought to the difference which arose at the dinner table; but it was not so

with Sir Henry Priapus. His hot and impetuous disposition could ill brook the rebuffs he had received, and he aimed for vengeance. On many much less important occasions, and with more trifling pretexts, he had engaged in duels ; and while his desire to avenge himself on Kincat by seducing Sally from her constancy to him, prompted him to avoid that sort of open breach which would render this first wish of his heart abortive, his haughty and fiery inclination could ill brook the idea of suffering the reproofs of his host, even justly merited as his own conscience told him they were, to pass by without calling for that sort of explanation which the laws of honorable intercourse demanded, on occasions of this description.

If Sir Henry was at a loss how to resolve in this critical emergency, Frib-

ble was quite as much perplexed how to advise. He was totally averse to any duelling, as this would place his thousand pounds in jeopardy; and after racking his brains for some ten minutes, he found himself constrained to confess that he knew not what was to be done, unless Sir Henry could find some friend in the world to whom he could depute the task of meeting Kincat in the field.

“A most excellent idea, Fribble!” exclaimed Sir Henry—“and by my faith I know none fitter for the office than yourself. It is as much to your interest as to mine, to prevent any meeting between Kincat and myself, for in the event of an open rupture I shall have a less favorable opportunity of pursuing my designs. Yes, my dear Fribble, you are the very man, and you

are entitled to my best thanks for your most friendly suggestion !”

This most unexpected reply came like a thunder stroke upon the discomposed nerves of Fribble, whose courage immediately fell down to the very verge of cowardice, and who instantly began to curse his own folly, which had prompted him to obtrude upon Sir Henry the advice of which he was now to reap the benefit, by being compelled to expose himself either to the probability of the baronet’s everlasting displeasure, or to the uncertain result of an affair of honor.

Sir Henry had fixed his eyes earnestly on Fribble, from the moment he had done speaking to that when Fribble, after collecting all the relics of his manliness, stammered forth—“ upon my

honor, Sir Henry—I am sensible—yes, very sensible of the—the—favor—I say the favor—you would confer upon me—yes—me—but really I think—that is, it strikes me, that it would wear a very—very—awkward appearance for me to take your place in this business!”

“Not at all, Fribble—not at all! How the devil can it appear awkward?” ejaculated Sir Henry, who, the instant he saw the disinclination of Fribble to enter into the broil in his stead, was the more fixed in his determination to insist upon his giving such a proof of his attachment to him—“Surely, Fribble, you will make no objection, after so warmly and repeatedly professing your friendship for me! It is not possible that you are afraid of consequences?”

“Afraid! Afraid!—What me!—Me

afraid !” — stammered Fribble, with all the symptoms of fear peeping through every feature of his countenance. “ God bless you, Sir Henry !—My dear friend, do not throw out such an insinuation against my courage ! But you know, Sir Henry, if I fight Kincat, who is a terrible gunpowder fellow, according to every account, what chance shall I have, supposing I should escape with my life, which is very uncertain, of finding any opportunity to promote your designs upon Sally. Believe me, Sir Henry, I would willingly sacrifice my life to serve you, but to sacrifice it without doing you service would be altogether a folly !”

“ But, my good Fribble,” quoth Sir Henry, smiling at the anxiety which marked the manner and the tone of Fribble, “ If you should chance to kill Kincat, there will be no impediment

remaining to the accomplishment of my designs upon Sally—"and as to his killing you, why it is fitty to one against a shot taking effect. But you shall go with me instantly, Fribble, and I'll give you a few lessons with my duelling pistols. In two hours you shall be able to cut an apple in two at twelve paces distant. I have fought in my time a dozen duels, and the worst hurt I ever received was one which carried off the tip of my right ear, and which I brought on myself by shrinking."

Fribble trembled to his toes as he expressed his belief that the matter might easily be adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties, without proceeding to these extremities to which Sir Henry referred: the latter, however, was so fully bent upon drawing Fribble into a duel, that he would not suffer himself to be

thwarted from his purpose, even for a moment; but immediately resumed—
“ It cannot be settled, Fribble, in any other way than by a meeting. You must stand in my shoes, and call Kincat out; for if you hesitate to give me this proof of your friendship, which, after all, is very trifling, I will be off my engagement to give you the thousand, as well as all the consequences of the lamed horse and broken tilbury.”

This threat produced a most extraordinary effect, communicating to Fribble a degree of courage which he never felt before. It was now, however, attended by no trifling struggles, and it was with no inconsiderable difficulty that he mustered up vigour enough to exclaim that he would rather meet a hundred men, than incur the displeasure of his dear friend Sir Henry, and

that if there was no other method of arrangement left, he must adopt the obvious course.

When this reluctant consent had been extorted from Fribble, nothing remained to be done but to make the necessary preparations for the affair in agitation. A second for Fribble was necessary to be found, to whom the arrangements must according to the usual course of proceeding, be committed. Kincat could not take upon himself this situation, which would have been, in fact, to place himself precisely in the situation which he had been studying to avoid, and draw himself into a quarrel with Kincat, and as Fribble was compelled to be satisfied with the baronet's arguments, he was obliged to look through his catalogue of acquaintance to find some one to take upon himself the office.

After due deliberation, the election of the two friends fell upon Colonel Cunningham, a very intimate friend of Fribble, a man who if he had never performed any prodigies of valour in the field, was yet perfectly qualified to appear as the master of the ceremonies in a duel. The Colonel had in fact been two or three times a principal in affairs of honor, but although rumor had terribly slandered his intrepidity on these occasions, no charge of cowardice had ever been fixed upon him, so that he was still received as an associate with that fashionable fraternity denominated men of honor. Like Fribble the Colonel had for years subsisted on half pay, and the proceeds of his luck at the gaming houses, and he was therefore, a fit and becoming companion for Fribble, who immediately sent off a note requesting his attendance, as Sir Henry very prudently declined suffering him

to be the bearer of his own message.

The interval which elapsed between the dispatch of this note, and the arrival of the Colonel, was most terrible to Fribble, who saw himself in imagination already wounded and mangled and dying to please the unfeeling caprice of another man. These horrors of fancy were greatly aggravated by the reflection that there was no receding, now he had gone so far as to give his consent to Sir Henry, and to send to demand the presence of the Colonel; and by the recommendation which Sir Henry, on purpose to increase his tortures, gave to him to look to his worldly affairs while he was at leisure; and, for fear of accident, in case he had any particular requests to make, to commit them to writing that they might be fulfilled.

“Zounds, my dear baronet,” exclaimed Fribble—“do you then really think all these preparations necessary? Oh Lord! What! Am I to be set up as a mark for another man to level at, without receiving any provocation? Oh! I shall absolutely expire! I will send the Colonel to arrange the affair, for he is an adept in these matters, and I am very sure he can have no desire to see his own friend led out into the field like a lamb to the slaughter-house!”

A frown from Sir Henry checked the progress of Fribble’s ejaculations—“I blush for you, Fribble,” quoth the baronet; “and now tell you plainly that after giving me your promise to call Kincat to account, if you fail in your fulfilments, I shall have no alternative left but to call you into the field! After this explicit declaration of my resolu-

tion, I leave it to your own decision to determine in what manner you will think fit to regulate your conduct !”

Fribble was but a moment in coming to his resolve, for since it was thus made a clear case, that with one or the other he must fight, he determined to stand abreast with Kincat, and not run the risk of losing his thousand pounds ; and as Colonel Cunningglance at this instant made his appearance, Fribble had barely time to exclaim to Sir Henry—“ My dear baronet, your friendship is more to me than life. Negotiation is out of the question !”

Very few words were necessary to inform the Colonel that his presence was required in the adjustment of an affair of honor ; and as it was particularly expedient to make a confident of him, Fribble put him in possession of all the circum-

stances of the case, taking care to dwell with rather an ambiguous kind of accent upon the declaration that he himself had no quarrel with, nor antipathy to, his opponent; but that he was stimulated to put his life in competition with the life of Kincat, entirely out of friendship to Sir Henry, and with a view to establish his own courage, and prove the sincerity of his attachment.

“It matters very little,” replied the Colonel—“what is the motive which induces you to fight, or whether you have a friendship or an enmity to the man you are going to meet, if you have made up your mind to give him the meeting. You have sent for me, my dear Fribble, to act as your second on this occasion; it is therefore only for me to carry your challenge, and make the necessary arrangements for your meeting.”

“Certainly,” cried Sir Henry—“and the sooner the arrangements are made, and the meeting takes place, the better: for such matters as these cannot be too quickly got rid of. What say you, Fribble, to a meeting to-morrow morning.”

“That is very sudden, my dear baronet,” replied Fribble, trembling to his toes, and staring wildly—“To be sure, as you say, Sir Henry, it cannot be too soon settled; but as honor only requires for us to meet and shew a proper courage, and does not absolutely demand that we should kill one another; would it not be as well to wait until after dinner, because when Kincat has taken his wine, his hand may not be quite so steady as in the morning.”

“Poltroon!” thought Sir Henry; but he checked himself in time to pre-

vent the expression from escaping his lips, and to soften down the momentary indignation which marked his countenance into a smile of an equivocal meaning, which Fribble's flattering and good opinion of himself prevented him from understanding in any sense which could cause him mortification. "Tut!" quoth the baronet, "why, Fribble, his eyes will not be open if you fix the meeting for day-break, and the uncertainty of the eye will be much more friendly to you than a little paralysis of the hand. So come, indite your challenge, and don't let us have any unnecessary delay!"

The Colonel joining in the request, Fribble found himself completely shut up in a corner, and debarred from every opportunity of making his retreat. With the best grace he could command, therefore, he declared himself perfectly ready

to commit his honor and his life to their friendship, and although the word life palpably faltered in his throat so as to attract the notice of his companions, they affected to suffer it to pass unobserved: and Sir Henry setting pen, ink and paper before the perplexed Fribble, desired he would pen his challenge in such terms as Colonel Cunningglance, on whose experience every reliance ought to be placed, might think proper to suggest.

By way of putting his courage in proper tune, Fribble swallowed two or three bumpers of champagne, and then taking up the pen, with something like a desperate movement, he called upon the Colonel, who immediately began to give him his cue, in the following terms. —“ Sir, If your general conduct at the dinner table yesterday was the very reverse of gentlemanly, I should not

have considered myself justified in calling upon you for explanations, had you not shewn a disposition to mark my friend Sir Henry Priapus, and myself, as the particular objects of your attack. The friendly sentiments which Sir Henry feels towards you may prevent him from returning the insult, but as I have no such motive for forbearance, I offer you the alternatives of either making an apology in the presence of the same company, or of fixing your time, place, &c. with the bearer, who is authorized by me."

Two or three times did Fribble attempt in vain to remonstrate against the language of this letter, owning that Kincat had not insulted him, as far as he was aware, either by look, word, or action ; and disputing most vehemently the propriety of calling a man to account for his behaviour at his own

table. Every objection, however, was treated as insignificant and unworthy to produce the slightest impression upon a man of spirit and honor. The epistle was therefore sealed up, and addressed, and Colonel Cunningglance immediately sought the apartment of Kincat to deliver to him the challenge, and to adopt such measures as might be necessary to bring the affair to a speedy and effectual termination.

As all these matters took place within the hotel, it may not appear singular that the Colonel should return by the time Kincat and Fribble had finished the bottle of champagne, which had produced the effect of enlivening the valour of the former, making that which before was a dead principle, an active and animating emotion. While the influence of the exhilarating liquor was full upon the brain of Fribble, he felt

as though he could willingly have met and fought a dozen such antagonists as Kincat; and when the Colonel returned and stated that Kincat had referred him to Captain Steeple, and that with the latter, he had arranged for the meeting to take place at sun-rise the following morning, Fribble heard the news without changing colour, or displaying the least symptom of apprehension, save for a single moment when the Colonel, as if disposed to probe him to the quick, suggested to him the propriety of turning his thoughts to the disposition of his worldly concerns.

The first mention of these concerns had indeed clearly overthrown all the edifices of valor which Kincat had taken so much pains to rear; another glass of wine, however, operated as a timely check upon his sinking spirits, and after a pause of a few moments, he found

sufficient composure to reply, without stammering or confusion of countenance, “ As to money matters I have none to arrange ; for I am without a shilling in my pocket, and I am beset with debts on every side. I have a son, poor devil, but he is hardly old enough to feel any long sorrow for my loss, if it should be the will of heaven to bring my days to a sudden conclusion ; and he has a grandfather and grandmother who will perhaps take him under their protection. I have a brother, but he has been long ashamed of me, and I am now ashamed of him. There is no other person in the world who is connected me ! ”

“ All this is very clear and easy to be understood, my dear Fribble ; ” exclaimed Sir Henry. “ You appear to be perfectly serene in your disposition of affairs. The next question, my dear fellow, is, where you would be buried ? ”

“Buried ! Bu—bu—buried ?” echoed Fribble, spilling half the glass of champagne which he was lifting to his lips to give a new impulse to his intrepidity.—“Did I understand you right, Sir Henry ? Did you say bu—bu—buried ?”

“Yes, Sir Henry is perfectly in the right, my friend,” exclaimed the Colonel ; “the chance of battle is always doubtful. Supposing that Mr. Kincat was as awkward a marksman as my friend’s dog, yet it might so happen that his ball may prove fatal to you, and you may have taken a fancy to some pleasant church yard or other to repose in. Brompton, for instance, is very well in this respect. But you should make your election while danger is still at a distance.”

“Zounds and the devil !” cried Frib-

ble in a paroxysm of despair—"I have not enough in the world to pay a coachman to carry me so far, and to throw me in without a coffin, shroud or prayer. But I am sure you are only quizzing me, you cannot be serious when you talk of my dying, for you seem to be so little concerned at the idea, that I am positive you have only thrown out such hints with a view to frighten me to death, and thus save Kincat the trouble of killing me."

"Will a bullet kill my dear Fribble?" enquired Sir Henry, looking the daunted duellist full in the face, and speaking in a tone of more than an usual emphasis—"Have you any spell which renders you invulnerable to a pistol ball? For shame, my dear Fribble, think for yourself. You know something of the nature of life and death. If you go into the field to meet

another upon terms of honorable defiance, you must make up your mind to endure all the risks?

“ If,” repeated Fribble—“ now by that if, my dear Sir Henry, I know not why Kincat and I should be obliged to do this ! Has he done any thing worthy of death—or have I ? Lord bless you, I should not sleep easy in my bed for the next three months, at the thoughts I had killed a man in the very prime of life, who had never been guilty of any crime against me ! Dear me, Colonel, cannot you find out any other method to settle this business, without the interference of pistols ?”

“ If you choose to give instead of to receive an apology,” quoth the Colonel, in a sneering tone of voice, “ I dare say your opponent will have no objection to let you off on the trifling condition that you suffer

you suffer yourself to be posted upon all the walls in and about the metropolis as a coward. But in that case, Mr. Fribble, I must beg of you to dispense with my further services, for I should consider myself inevitably disgraced by being a party in such a transaction."

"And I will withdraw all my friendship and countenance from a man who would thus prove himself an unworthy member of honorable society," said Sir Henry—"And what is more, I will be off the bargains I have made"—

"Say no more—Sir Henry—say no more!" interrupted Fribble—"I may as well die by the ball of a pistol, as from absolute famine. So say no more, my friends—it was only a momentary remorse, and now I am ready to go through with the business in a

manner becoming a man of strict honor, and unimpeachable courage. But where shall I provide pistols? I have an excellent pair, but they are pledged for the sum of a couple of guineas."

As he said this, Fribble produced a pawnbroker's duplicate, and Sir Henry advanced the sum necessary to redeem them, on condition that the Colonel should have the ticket given into his possession, lest Fribble should feel any return of his penitential symptoms, which might induce him to change his resolution before he redeemed the weapons. The duplicate was accordingly delivered, when a trusty messenger was sent to the pawnbroker's, and in the course of half an hour the pistols were lying on the table, having been pronounced both by Sir Henry and the Colonel perfectly competent to the performance of the duty for which they

were assigned on the following morning.

Sir Henry and the Colonel were fully aware of the very difficult card they had to play; for in spite of the rapidity with which they circulated the courage-inspiring glass, and of all their united efforts to cheer the vigour of Fribble, the cloven foot of his cowardice would ever and anon peep out, and threaten destruction to all the scheme. They were cautious, however, to exercise an unrestricted vigilance, not even allowing him to move out of the apartment for an instant, without a couple of waiters at his heels, on whose trusty watchfulness they could place the fullest reliance, and when at length they were compelled to consent to his going to rest, especial care had been taken to secure the windows of the bed-room, and to fasten the door on the outside,

the instant he was completely caged, so as to preclude every possibility of escape. Independent of these precautions, a waiter was stationed at the door to give notice of any movement within.

They had ample reason before the night was over to congratulate themselves upon these measures of security which they had adopted; for before two hours had elapsed, Fribble betrayed a restlessness of a most suspicious description. Scarcely was his bedroom door closed upon him, before he felt horrors of mind to which he had been hitherto a stranger. Hope and comfort entirely forsook his bosom, and were superseded by the fear of death. He began to recount all the pleasures of life, and was not long in coming to the decision that even without a sixpence from day to day to enjoy it, while he could sponge upon his friends for a

daily dinner, and upon the credulity of a few courtezans for now and then a night's voluptuousness, life was infinitely to be preferred to death. In proportion as this conviction took hold upon him, the horror of death increased; and he began with torturing care, to call to mind every instance of the fatal termination of a duel which had either occurred within his own recollection, or which he had picked up upon the authority of others: and the result was that he soon made up his mind to jump out at the window, and escape persecution and death at the same time.

With a view to carry this resolution into effect, Fribble made an essay upon one of the windows of the apartment, and finding after half an hour's trial, that it resisted his utmost exertions to open it, he began to suspect that Sir Henry and the Colonel had smoked his

design, and adopted this mode of counteracting it. The outside fastening of the door corroborated his suspicions, and convinced him that he must go boldly into the field and meet Kincat with all the appearance of courage he could assume, or submit to the galling mortification of being sneered at, and ridiculed and branded as a coward in every circle where he had been accustomed, or might hereafter presume, to thrust his obnoxious head.

No sooner did he discover that he had no other alternative, than he began to call in religion to his aid, and to vociferate his prayers in a tone sufficiently loud and doleful to reach the ears and excite the risibility of the waiter who was stationed outside the door. Whether the motive which urged his vows was fear or religion, there could be no doubt that his devotions were sin-

ere and urgent, for they continued, with very few intermissions, when his feelings found a more boisterous and less pious mode of venting themselves, until the dawn of the eventful morning made its entrance through the crannies in the shutters, and Colonel Cunningham wrapped at the door, "the dreadful note of preparation!"

Dreadful indeed was the sound to poor Fribble, who almost considered it the "knell of his departing hour," and scarcely could he summon sufficient courage to make his way to the door to receive his unwelcome visitor. The Colonel's inquiries were all anticipated by the very first glance he caught of Fribble's countenance, which bore most gloomy and visible indications of the state of his mind, and of the unsatisfactory manner in which he had passed the whole of the night.

“ You seem agitated and ill ;” exclaimed the Colonel—“ Have courage my dear fellow, a very short time will put an end to your anxiety, and whatever may be the result, will unquestionably repair your wounded honor. We must be on the alert, or Kincat will be in the field before us, for he has been stirring this half hour, and I this moment met Captain Steeple with a case of pistols. I understand Kincat is universally acknowledged to be a most excellent shot !”

This was consolation with a vengeance, and so powerful was its effect as instantaneously to take away from Fribble all power to utter the reply which he had premeditated. He gasped for breath, turned pale, clasped his hands, and lifted up his eyes to heaven in speechless agony ; then put his trembling hand within the arm of the Colo-

nel, and thus suffered himself to be led out of his chamber to the apartment where Sir Henry waited to accompany them.

The baronet would have complimented Fribble on the expedition with which he had dressed himself for the field, had not his visage been such as to make him waver in his opinion whether such a compliment was merited or not. That he was not deceived, the baronet was speedily convinced when he discovered that Fribble had lost his voice, and that he walked with all the trembling debility of the "slipperd pantaloons," who had borne the storms of some three quarters of a century.

Unwilling, however, to add to the discomposure of Fribble, Sir Henry suppressed his real feelings of contempt, and attempted to instil something like

courage into the poor sufferer, by words of kindness, and an attempt to ridicule the idea of any danger in a rencontre like the present, offering to bet fifty to one that Fribble returned from the field without drawing or shewing a drop of blood, or being harmed by any thing except it might be by his terrors.

Fribble was a little restored by this opinion of Sir Henry, and became sufficiently composed to lend a decent attention to Sir Henry and the Colonel, who as he walked between them to the appointed spot, gave him abundance of advice how to act, and did their utmost to induce him to make his appearance before his antagonist with at least an assumed courage, which would have the effect of repelling the disgrace which would otherwise attach to them all.

About a dozen times in the course of a walk of about as many minutes, Fribble had sounded his companions as to the danger which menaced him, and he was again repeating the question, when his ears were most unwelcomely greeted by an exclamation of the Colonel that they had arrived within sight of the appointed spot, and that he saw Kincat and Captain Steeple approaching on the opposite side, and within the distance of a few hundred paces.

No malefactor ever felt a more tremendous pang of anguish at the view of the fatal gibbet which was erected for the express purpose of terminating by an ignominious death, a life of ignominy, that that which struck through the feverish brain of Fribble, when he heard this most appalling intelligence. His knees smote each other; the cold drops of terror stood on his brow; and it was

not until his companions threatened to leave and expose him, and had actually quitted their hold on him for that purpose, that he could be brought to display that apparent composure of countenance and manner which would barely prevent his antagonist from stigmatizing him as a most pusillanimous and effeminate poltroon.

Fortunately for Fribble's good name, and for the credit of the whole trio, he had nothing to perform, but to take his post on the ground allotted him, and to wait the signal for the discharge of his pistol; and even to do this, he could scarcely command the competence. It was agreed upon to decide the priority of fire by lot, and as the lot fell upon Fribble, the Colonel whispered in his ear that he had only to be cool and make sure of Kincat, and then of course he himself would have no danger to en-

counter. A little cheered by this sort of forlorn hope, Fribble obeyed the signal, levelled his pistol and fired ; but to his great horror and amazement discovered too soon not only that he had missed his mark, but that Kincat was preparing to return his fire.

The interval was so brief as scarcely to allow Fribble an instant to recollect himself before the dreadful explosion of the pistol broke upon his ears, and the next moment he was prostrate on the ground. The moment Fribble fell, Kincat advanced with a look of genuine concern, and expressed his hope that any hurt which his adversary had received was of no serious consequence. The blood, however, which began to shew itself on the side of Fribble's neck-cloth, excited so much alarm in the bosom of Steeple, that he would not allow Kincat to await the result of an

examination into the extent of the injury which had been done, but hurried him away to a chaise which waited near the spot.

Sir Henry now began to fear that the affair had ended rather in a different manner to what he had hoped and anticipated, and with no slight chagrin and vexation began to assist the Colonel in loosening the neck-cloth of Fribble, and raising him from the ground. In the act of doing this, however, they were agreeably surprised by an exclamation from Fribble, who just then opened his eyes—"Where am I? Is this the other world? Ah, Sir Henry, are you there?"

"Do not think of another world, my dear Fribble!" returned Sir Henry—"Think of your friends; and in the name of heaven tell us whether you are mortally wounded or not?" Before

Fribble, however, had time to make an answer to this important question, the Colonel had torn off the neck-cloth which concealed the nature of the wound, and to his great joy had discovered, that there was nothing more than a slight scratch on the side of the neck, which bled freely."

The joyful news sounded most pleasantly to Sir Henry, and not less so to Fribble ; who, being raised into an erect position, and placed on his feet, shook himself repeatedly, to satisfy himself that he was alive, and had sustained no further mischief than that which had been discovered. But no sooner did he declare himself free from serious injury, than all the sympathy which had before been excited in the breasts of Sir Henry and the Colonel was completely eradicated, and both of them began to turn the courage of Fribble into such complete ridi-

cule, and now that all peril was over, to treat his fall with such keen satire, that he scarcely knew whether to congratulate himself upon the escape he had experienced, or to wish that the bullet had taken more certain effect, and delivered him from a persecution which he neither knew how to repel or to endure.

CHAP. VIII.

A necessary recurrence to Kincat.—The penetration of love elucidated in the agony of Sally.—The return of Captain Steeple to the hotel, who relieves the anxiety of Sally—Steeple's departure.—The note from Sir Henry Friapus—his interview with Sally and Sophy.—The effects of the interview—Sir Henry and Fribble in close consultation—The masquerade scheme—Fribble made happy by Sir Henry's liberality—The affair at the gaming house—Fribble's adventure on his return to his lodgings, which lightens his purse of some portion of its contents.

KINCAT was on the point of following Sally to her chamber when the challenge of Fribble was delivered to him; and as he was no stranger to the character of his challenger, he determined within

himself as soon as he had perused it, that there was something at the bottom of the affair which it would afford him pleasure to explore. There was no time, however, for hesitation, and there was as little opportunity for the gratification of the powerful curiosity by which he felt himself excited ; for the Colonel, who brought the note, was by no means inclined to be communicative. Kincat, therefore, called Captain Steeple, whose apartment was only separated from his own by a thin partition, and committing the conference with Colonel Cunningglance to his discretion, assented to all the conditions and arrangements which the two seconds instantly resolved upon.

Although Kincat was a man whose courage had never been impeached, and who was very little troubled with feelings of apprehension, he could not

dismiss from his breast some lurking uneasiness which seemed to prey upon his quiet, as he stood by the bedside and looked upon the sleeping Sally, who lay unconscious of the approach of any mischief which might put her happiness at risk. As he gazed upon her, the possibility at least that the event of the following morning might occasion a final separation glanced across his mind, carrying with it a pain which for the moment was almost intolerable, and which if it rendered him not a coward, robbed him of a portion of his manhood.

But he was lost in amazement when he began really to reflect upon the circumstance for a moment. He knew Fribble was no fighting man, but one who would much sooner have run from a battle than into one; it was not therefore very probable that this challenge originated with him; at the same time, that it was equally

irreconcilable to his ideas of Fribble's general conduct and character that this *petit maitre* of the fashionable world would become the *locum tenens* of another in such a perilous situation, and for the sake of avenging injuries in which he himself had no personal share nor interest. Kincat was never more at a loss than on the present occasion; and when he revolved the subject over and over in his mind, the result of his cogitations brought him not a whit nearer the mark than he was when he set out, excepting that he felt more and more convinced that the whole of the affair was to be attributed to some mysterious conspiracy against himself.

The restlessness of Kincat soon communicated itself to Sally, and the strangeness of his manner alarmed her vigilant apprehensions, and made her fear she scarce knew what. As soon,

however, as she gained courage to speak, she entreated him in a tone of the most winning kindness to tell her his griefs. His reply was rather aimed at the suppression of her fears than the conviction of her reason ; a circumstance of little import in the main had ruffled him for the moment, but a little rest would be sufficient to restore his composure.

Sally, discontented as she felt at the unsatisfactory tenor of this reply, affected to feel composed ; but there was a secret uneasiness on her mind which she could not fathom, but which was sufficiently powerful to prevent her from closing her eyes during the remainder of the night. All Kincat's exertions therefore to rise at the appointed hour of day-break, without disturbing Sally, were utterly useless: the watchful girl was too much on the alert to be deceived ; and scarcely had Kincat

stepped out of bed, before Sally, in a paroxysm of agony not to be described, sprang from the bed into his arms, exclaiming in a voice rendered almost inaudible by excessive emotion, "Gracious God, my dear Kincat, what is the matter? I am sure something very dreadful must have happened!"

Confounded by the suddenness of Sally's movement, and the abruptness of her question, Kincat was completely staggered, and could only stammer out a few incoherent words, which instead of appeasing the agitated girl served only to aggravate her anguish, "a mere trifle, my dear girl—a little business, which must be attended to—don't alarm yourself; I shall return before breakfast time—perhaps in an hour—perhaps—but pray compose yourself—there is no occasion for this excessive agitation."

Sally had scarcely heard the latter part of the sentence; her attention having been completely fixed by a conversation outside the door, from which she had gleaned a variety of words, which although they conveyed no connected meaning, to her apprehensive imagination imparted not less sense than sound, for she had distinguished the terms “duel”—“the park,”—“Sir Henry Priapus”—“seconds”—“surgeons”—“consequences, &c.”—One of the voices she easily ascertained to be that of Captain Steeple, and her scared fancy easily filled up every hiatus.

“I know it all—I see it all—I understand it all too well,” screamed the affrighted girl sinking into the bosom of Kincat.—“You are going out to meet that hateful Sir Henry. Oh! Why did the wretch ever make his appearance here,

to disturb a felicity which his malignant heart could not behold without envy? But, my dear Kincat, you must not, you shall not place your life in competition with his! 'Tis your Sally requests it. Reflect for a moment what would be my situation, deprived of him who is all the world to me! You have brought me from my home, and sundered all the ties of nature; you cannot leave me to the mercy of an unfeeling world, exiled from the only asylum which my heart ever acknowledged. Do not kill me by a refusal! Rather let me be the first victim of his quarrel, than live to hear from some hateful tongue the withering tale of your destruction."

"My dear Sally," replied Kincat, "you make yourself uneasy without a sufficient cause. These affairs are generally mere matters of form, and are scarcely

ever productive of any unpleasant consequences. Besides, I am well aware that the courage of my antagonist is only skin-deep, and that the meeting will lead to nothing beyond a change of words instead of a change of shots, and terminate at last in an apology from Fribble, who would rather at any time submit to the penance of a month's fasting and praying, than encounter the perils or danger of a pistol bullet."

All the assurances of Kincat failed to restore Sally to any moderate degree of composure; and in spite of all his endeavours to sooth her fears, her emotions became at length so violent as to cause an hysterical attack, which rendered it necessary to call in the assistance of some of the female inhabitants of the hotel, and while they were engaged in the attempt to recover the distressed

girl, Kincat embraced the opportunity of making his escape from a scene, the contemplation of which was gradually encroaching upon his manliness.

The sequel of the meeting up to the moment when the field was evacuated by both parties is already before the reader. Impressed with the conviction that Fribble had received a mortal wound, Kincat made the best of his way to Dover, leaving Captain Steeple behind him with instructions to join him at that port, as soon as he had communicated the circumstances to Sally, and made such necessary arrangements as the exigency of the case would permit. These arrangements, however, were not to include the departure of Sally and Sophy from the hotel, for although Kincat sincerely wished to carry his mistress with him, he had de-

terminated on the impulse of the moment that she should remain until it could be ascertained to what extent danger might threaten them.

Captain Steeple lost not a moment in repairing to the hotel, where he found Sally in a most lamentable situation, recovering from one fit only to fall into another, while Sophy and a groupe of female attendants were exerting themselves to the utmost to bring about the recovery of the unhappy girl. Steeple having received a hint of her real state, made up his mind to treat the circumstance with as much levity as possible, with a view to restore to Sally the composure which had been so completely overthrown.

The moment, however, she fixed her eyes upon Steeple, she raved out in a

tone of boisterous incoherency, which sufficiently spoke the real situation of her feelings at the instant—"Have you murdered him? If so, let me at least have the privilege of sitting by his body, and endeavouring to awaken him to life again with the animating voice of affection. Where have you thrown him? Ah! You have buried him privately! But I will wander through the earth to find his grave, and to sleep by his side!"

"My dear Madam," said Steeple, taking hold of her hand—"compose yourself! Mr. Kincat himself has dispatched me to you! He has indeed been engaged in an affair of honor this morning; but, upon my honor, he has received no manner of injury!"

A ray of delight beamed in Sally's

eyes as she heard the assertion of Kincat's safety. But the magnitude of her emotions were too vast for her strength, and with a smile of extacy sparkling from her eyes, and a cry of joy on her tongue, she fainted. Her insensibility, however, was but of short duration: the efforts of those about her speedily restored her to herself; and the renewal of Captain Steeple's assurances that Kincat was not injured in the affair, in a few moments completed her cure most effectually.

“ But where is he ? ” asked Sally, in a tone which seemed almost to imply a doubt, which, at the same time she disavowed—“ Why is he not come back ? Has any thing occurred of which I am yet to be informed ? Tell me, Captain, when shall I see him ? ”

Captain Steeple replied to this succession of questions, by briefly relating the circumstances which had taken place; and informing Sally, that in consequence of the supposed death of Fribble, it was at least necessary that Mr. Kincat should remain closely concealed, until that event was either confirmed or contradicted. If Fribble should not be dangerously hurt, Kincat would be enabled immediately to reappear; but for the moment, he had quitted London as soon as the affair had terminated, and was now on his way to——”

“ Good heavens—to where?” asked Sally, whose impatience would not allow her to wait for the termination of the sentence; and almost as speedily continuing—“ Why did he not take me

with him? Could he not confide in my affection? Could he not trust his Sally?"

"The delay of a moment, madam, might have endangered his personal security:" replied Steeple—"a chaise was in waiting at some little distance, which Fribble and Sir Henry Priapus had procured, and Kincat availed himself of it to quit town on the instant!"

"Sir Henry Priapus!" echoed Sally --- "What was he in the league against Kincat? It is all clear then. It was a treacherous scheme to rob me of him who is my only friend and protector, in order that they might prosecute their wicked designs against me! Would to heaven that Sir Henry had fallen instead of Fribble! I must away to join my dear Kincat. He cannot wish me to remain here alone in the midst of wretches capable of such

monstrous crimes! Captain, my dear Captain, conduct me to him!”

Steeple replied that it was impossible to comply with her request so suddenly as she wished. Kincat was gone to a sea-port town, whither he was about to join him instantly, and she would render him whom she loved a most essential service, by remaining to pick up all the information she could relative to Fribble's condition, if living; and to the designs of his friends, should the affair have terminated fatally to him. He also assured her, that as soon as any arrangement could be made for her to rejoin Kincat, it should be done; and in the meantime, she would have Sophy with her to keep her company, and the instant he himself reached Kincat, Robert, the confidential valet of the latter, should be sent back to town for the express

purpose of watching over her interests and safety.

Somewhat reassured by these promises, Sally yielded a reluctant consent to the departure of Kincat without her, after she had taken every possible pains to learn the state of Fribble, but without effect, as no other person of the party but Captain Steeple had yet returned to the hotel. Steeple, accordingly, to escape any possible danger which might await him, took a hasty leave of the ladies, promising that they should hear as soon as he reached Dover, and made the best of his way to join his principal.

Nearly an hour had passed away since Captain Steeple's departure, and still no news of the state of Fribble, had reached the females. Sophy, who was

not easily affected by circumstances of this nature, and who, independent of the effects of habit upon her feelings, possessed from nature an elasticity of disposition which was at all times sufficient to repel the attacks of adventitious griefs, had with some difficulty prevailed upon her gloomy companion to throw off some portion of that melancholy which had taken possession of her, and to assume, at least, an appearance of comparative liveliness. They had by this time adjourned from the bed-room, and entered the breakfast apartment, and Sally had consented; in consequence of a menace from Sophy, to sit down and participate in the cheerless meal.

They had scarcely seated themselves, when a waiter, entered the room, and presenting a note to Sally, retired. "What

in the name of heaven is this?" exclaimed the poor girl, whose anxious soul was always prognosticating evil. Sophy fixed her eyes steadily upon the countenance of her agitated companion, as the latter broke the seal, and without making any reply to the ejaculation, patiently waited the result of the perusal of an epistle, the source and purport of which she was as fully at a loss to comprehend as her to whom it was addressed.

"It is from that monster, Sir Henry Priapus!" exclaimed Sally, throwing the note upon the table, while her changing countenance too evidently explained the agitation which shook her mind. — A moment's silence followed; for Sophy was too completely in ignorance of the contents of this mysterious communication to venture a

single word, until she had found a little more stable foundation for an observation or two. Very speedily, however, Sally roused herself from the transitory torpor into which she had fallen, and resumed—"The villain shall not be gratified! I was sure it was all a diabolical conspiracy against Kincat on my account! Tell me, Sophy, ought I admit him?" As she asked this question, she took up the note, and read it to her companion. It was brief, and left a great deal of scope for conjecture.—"Sir Henry Priapus presents compliments to Mrs. Kincat, and requests the favour of an interview for a few minutes, upon a subject in which her own happiness and the safety of Mr. Kincat are most deeply involved—Sir Henry waits for an instant reply."—"You must see him," replied Sophy, after a very short consideration of the contents of

the note ---“ From him you will learn the state of Fribble; and, besides, the interview may tend to give you some useful information, which you may transmit to Kincat himself?” Sally mused a little before she consented to the suggestion of Sophy. “ I will do as you desire,” said she at length; “ but it must be on the express condition that you do not quit the apartment for a single moment while he remains. Have *you* no suspicion of his motives :”

“ I have every suspicion of him,” answered Sophy---“ he is an artful man, and must be met artfully. You must take great care how you act towards him; and whatever your hatred and contempt of him may prompt you to say, suppress your feelings, and assume a composure and civility which will puzzle him, and perhaps draw him off

his guard. Feel no fear of him, my dear girl. I will remain close by your side, and it will be strange indeed if we do not both together prove a match for this terrible monster !”

A message was immediately dispatched to Sir Henry, conveying Mrs. Kincat’s readiness to receive his visit, and before the breakfast was half concluded, Sir Henry himself made his appearance. “ This intrusion, ladies,” said he---“ will I trust be excused when you are made acquainted with its nature. You have, no doubt, heard of the affair of this morning ! Every thing in my power I did to prevent Fribble from meeting Mr. Kincat, but in vain, and I was compelled to act as his supporter, and thus to appear in the field in a character which must make me hateful in your estimation ; while my inclination was

with my dear friend Kincat, the arbitrary rule of honourable custom compelled me to support his antagonist. The consequence is, that Fribble is wounded !”

“ Wounded !” repeated Sally, with considerable eagerness of manner---
“ Wounded---not dead ? Is his wound likely to be mortal ? Tell me, Sir Henry ; relieve me from this load of cruel suspense. Is your friend Fribble likely to die, or to recover ?”

“ If it will give you any consolation, to know, madam, that he is in no kind of danger,” returned Sir Henry---“ I am happy to have the power of giving you relief. He was merely scratched by the ball, and although from his dropping like a stone we at first concluded that he was a dead man, we very soon discovered that his own fears had felled him,

and not the pistol-ball. He came home with me, and will be happy to convince you of his existence, in *propria persona*, if it will afford you, madam, the slightest gratification."

Never did Sir Henry appear of so much value in the estimation of Sally as he did at this moment, so agreeably did his words vibrate upon her ears. While she was congratulating herself upon the promising issue of an affair which had just before worn such a very unpromising appearance, Sophy had signified, both for Sally and herself, a wish to see Fribble himself, as he could certainly satisfy them out of his own mouth beyond the possibility of contradiction, whether he was dead or alive. Sir Henry accordingly rang the bell, and dispatched a message requesting the company of Fribble, who, before a

minute had elapsed, made his entrance with a countenance as ruefully white as though it had been twenty days bleaching under the radiance of an eastern sun.

“ Now, Mr. Fribble, answer for yourself !” exclaimed Sir Henry, as the ghastly visaged duellist entered the room. “ None but yourself can satisfy these ladies that you have not been killed in the duel this morning. Are you really alive, sir, or have you given up the ghost ?”

“ Why really, ladies, to say truth, this is veritably myself in body as well as in spirit ;” resumed Fribble---“ But it is a miracle that I am here to tell you so ; for truth to tell, when a pistol ball comes so near one’s windpipe as to take a slice off the side of the neck, it looks

a little awkward. D.--n this fighting -- I beg pardon, ladies, for swearing in your company—but never more will I go out for the sport of being shot at and shooting at another, by way of turn and turn about. I feared I should be in a mess, and was very reluctant to go!” .

“ Reluctant!” echoed Sally and Sophy at the same time. The exclamation was as quickly reverberated from Sir Henry, who casting a very expressive and instructive glance at Fribble, which the latter very perfectly comprehended to its utmost latitude of meaning, resumed—“ Was not the duel of your own seeking, my good Fribble? Did not I beg, intreat, implore you to pause, and not hazard the lives of yourself and my dear friend Kincat?”

The look of Sir Henry had prepared

Fribble for something unexpected, but, with all his preparation he was so confounded by the easy assurance of the baronet, that he could not answer him for a few moments, during which a number of reasons *pro* and *con* passed across his mind, such as the chance of the thousand pounds, if Sir Henry could succeed upon Sally through his assistance; and as this argument was of itself so powerful as to hold the field in the face of all which could be brought against it, it consequently led him to the usual result—a compliance with the wishes of his patron. As soon, therefore, as he had recovered himself sufficiently, Fribble made reply—"I know I did, Sir Henry—I know it all as well as you do! My honor would not suffer me to compromise my courage! I know you persuaded me not to fight against your dear friend: but I was too deep in for

it then, or I should have been most happy to adopt any negociations. The consequence, however, is all on myself; and I thank heaven, that I have escaped so well !”

As soon as the first extacy of Sally on finding that there was no impediment to the re-appearance of Kincat was removed, she began to lament the hard fate which had kept back the news from her until Steeple had left town, by which unfortunate circumstance she was disabled from sending any information to Kincat which might expedite his return. There was now no alternative but to wait patiently for the receipt of letters from them, as she was entirely at a loss how to address them, were she to write to them by this day's post. These reflections necessarily damped and diminished the satisfaction

she would otherwise have experienced, and induced her, after all, to complain that the circumstances were not so free from unpleasantness as she could have wished.

Sir Henry's agreeable introduction of himself had produced so favourable an effect upon the ladies, that they made no objection to the protraction of that which originally purported to be a mere call to a long morning visit; for as they had no employment upon hand to relieve the tediousness of the time, the attentions and the conversation of Sir Henry, who was an excellent companion, effected the same purpose, and before he took his leave of them, he had so well improved the hours he had spent in their company, as not only to remove all the injurious impressions which his conduct had previously made

upon their minds, but absolutely to make some little progress towards the attainment of their good opinion, and to gain from Sophy a half invitation to repeat his visit

No sooner had Sir Henry and Fribble left the room, than Sally began to express her regrets at her inability to send off the agreeable intelligence she had just picked up to Kincat. It was uncertain when she should have the opportunity; for many circumstances might operate upon him to deter him from writing, if he was apprehensive of any unpleasant consequences from the affair of the duel; and in that case a long time might elapse before she could see him again. These reflections completely destroyed all the harmony of her mind, and so predisposed her to a fit of melancholy, that all the gaiety

and thoughtless prattle of Sophy, who seemed to be totally indifferent whether Captain Steeple returned again or not, could scarcely preserve her in even a tolerable degree of composure.

“Why make yourself uneasy about it?” exclaimed Sophy—“the great danger is all done away with, and our gentlemen will return soon enough, trust them! For my part now Steeple may stay away and make the tour of the continent if he will; I assure you his absence will not have the effect of making me dull for a single moment. And as Sir Henry seems really to have been against this meeting, and to have done all in his power to prevent it, and is besides such a pleasant fellow, and so very much devoted to us, I can’t see any real cause for our making ourselves unhappy all day. Follow my example,

my dear girl, and while our protectors are absent let us take all the pleasure we can, and then shew that we know how to make the best of our time."

"Do not talk to me of pleasure nor of happiness until my dear Kincat returns:" answered Sally—"for you may believe me I shall be a stranger to them. Sir Henry has indeed extricated himself from the slanderous prejudice I had entertained against him; but although I think him a pleasant companion, I shall not think myself justified in receiving his visits while Kincat is absent. I trust I shall always study a becoming decorum of conduct, notwithstanding I have fallen so low in the scale of virtue."

"Well! how prodigiously moral you are, my dear girl!" cried Sophy, whose principles scorned any such fetters as

those to which Sally submitted—"You are really very fit for a nunnery; a good companion for fusty old monks and gothic cells, and rosaries, and all the rest of those gloomy plagues. But you must not give way to such antiquated notions. You are too young and too beautiful for heaven: it is time enough to preach up morality and so forth, when nobody will talk with you about love and enjoyment. No, no, you shall not qualify yourself for a cloister while I am with you! To-morrow I have planned such a delightful walk, and in the evening I mean to lay hold upon Sir Henry, and somebody else perhaps, to squire us to the theatre."

"Hold, hold! and let me go to my room!" interrupted Sally—"Indeed you must excuse me! I will not go to the theatre; nor can I consent to be-

come a party in any amusement at present. I admire your light-heartedness ; but believe me I do not envy it, nor can I imitate it. Nay, do not move to leave me ; I was wrong to think of retiring when you have been so kind as to become my companion. My heart is very heavy, but perhaps an air upon your harp, may tend to revive me."

Sophy, without saying a word, caught up her harp, and running wildly over its strings, speedily produced that beautiful air — "Haste to Thorny Down tomorrow," which an eminent composer had very recently enriched with some graceful variations and dedicated them to herself, a circumstance which was not a little flattering to her vanity, and which was not less productive to the composer himself. The air had the desired effect. Sally's feelings gradually

began to harmonize, and in the course of half an hour, Sophy's music had produced the full effect, at which her eloquence had aimed in vain, and restored Sally to a degree of cheerfulness which even surpassed the hopes as well as the expectations of the gay musician, who felt herself recompensed by the complete success which crowned her skill.

In the mean time Sir Henry retired with Fribble only to plan some scheme for the improvement of the absence of Kincat, which he hoped would be protracted for some time. This fortunate termination of the duel adventure, had indeed appeared as if brought about by propitious fortune to aid his views, and to throw into his way an opportunity which he might either lose or improve as he himself might think fit. He had withal succeeded so well in this inter-

view which his assurance had gained him, that he began to calculate confidently in his mind upon the most triumphant success, provided the premature return of Kincat did not at the same time overthrow and develop his plan, and place him in a situation of serious responsibility for his wicked intentions.

Full of these sanguine expectations, Sir Henry began to express his gratitude to Fribble, for taking upon himself so promptly and so fully all the odium of the late duel, continuing, “ My good fellow, be assured I will not be false to my word ; on the contrary, lend me all your energies to assist me in my project, and when I have obtained it, in addition to what I have before promised, I will pledge myself to become your banker for a good handsome *douceur* annually. I have set my heart on the

girl, and I would spend three fourths of my income rather than be disappointed in a scheme which will give me ample revenge upon her for all her insolent treatment of me, and enable me to plant a thorn in the bosom of the haughty Kincat."

This promise completely made atonement to Fribble for all he had suffered, especially as by way of earnest and stimulus, the baronet immediately put into his hand a twenty pound note, accompanied by a promise to go with him to Boodle's that very night, and to stake to the tune of a couple of hundreds as a joint stock, of which they would both equally participate in the event of luck. Fribble's eye glistened with delight, and vowed eternal gratitude, before his tongue could utter a single syllable.

As soon, however, as he had recovered the power of expression, Fribble's gratitude found an audible vent in a torrent of vows and compliments, which surpassed every thing of the kind he had ever before produced.—“Talk of generosity, Sir Henry,” said he; “why you are without doubt as far exceeding every other man in existence in liberality, as—as—as—but never mind.---I am sure, sir, you will excuse me if I am not very correct in my answer. Command me to fight a hundred duels, and I will never hesitate nor flinch.”

“Nor fall without a wound—eh, Fribble?” interrupted Sir Henry, looking archly at Fribble, the changes in whose countenance gave proof that he felt the justice of the remark: and then resuming, the baronet exclaimed---“Any

thing but that, my dear Fribble! Any thing but fighting duels; and in future I will take that department upon myself! But have you no scheme to suggest? Your inventive faculties are pretty generally on the alert; we have not a moment for hesitation, if we would succeed!"

For a few minutes, Fribble scratched his head, and taxed his intellects without success to strike out some plausible scheme. At length a happy thought lighted him at once out of the labyrinth of his perplexity, and put him in possession of ample means to repay the obligation under which Sir Henry had just laid him. "Sir Henry," said he, "you can get opportunities of conversing with this perplexing angel: use them to instil into her mind a jealousy of Kincat. Tell her he is not out of

London, but that you are privy to his actions, and that on Monday night he has made an appointment with a lady to meet her at the masquerade. Describe the dresses and characters in which both are to appear, and when you have worked her up sufficiently, you will have no very great difficulty to prevail upon her to go to the masquerade with Sophy, and leave all the rest of the arrangements to me. This is Thursday ; we have plenty of time to complete every thing, so as to defeat the danger of any disappointment or suspicion."

Sir Henry was delighted at the plausibility of the plan : it appeared to him to be so excellent as not to admit even the slightest doubt of success ; and in the ardor of his joy and gratitude he embraced Fribble over and over again,

called him his dearest friend, his guardian genius, reiterated all his promises of reward, and intreated Fribble not to forget the appointment he had made with him for this very evening at Booodle's, which might, by chance, turn out the most fortunate engagement he had ever been called upon to fulfil.

So occupied was Fribble, during the residue of the day in the contemplation of the possible profits of the evening, and in self-congratulation in being master of a twenty pound note, that every gloomy remembrance of the affair of the morning, and even the wound he had received, were entirely obliterated from his brain. At the appointed hour he was punctual in his attendance, and Sir Henry having deposited the promised joint stock, the hopes and fears of

this pair of worthies took quite a new turn.

The very first outset was productive of eminent good fortune, the stakes being doubled within a very minutes after the play had commenced: this fortune continued for the space of an hour, by which time the two hundreds which had been risked at the outset, had accumulated to nearly two thousand pounds. Still avaricious of more gain, however, the baronet, who acted upon his own suggestion alone, without consulting Fribble at all, pursued his luck too closely; and in less than half an hour afterwards the pile of profits was razed down to its original foundation. For an additional two hours the play continued, and at the termination of the night's adventure, the baro-

net and Fribble considered themselves happy in rising from the table the winners of about fifty pounds between them.

Trifling, however, as this sum was, the moiety of it to Fribble was a fortune, and as powerful symptoms of pleasure were marked upon his countenance as if he had been a gainer of as many thousands. His imagination, that most industrious quality or principle belonging to him, began to build a thousand airy edifices. All his projects of future notoriety and prosperity seemed to him to be upon the very verge of realization ; he was already the proprietor of a house of play, of the very first magnitude and fashion ; and beheld himself the owner of a splendid mansion, and the happy proprietor of a splendid equipage, and of all those luxuries

which to the depraved taste of the *bon vivant*, constitute the only joys worthy the pursuit of intellectual man.

Nor is this foible in Fribble's character deserving of that severity of censure which, at a first glance, the morose cynic might be disposed to cast upon it. It was the error of birth and of education. He was born of a family who considered fashion the sole legitimate arbiter of human conduct—the standard to which all the actions of mankind ought to be submitted, and by which their value should be decided: this being a sort of hereditary failing, had been handed down from father to son, with the most scrupulous veneration; and that member of the stock whose behaviour was in hostility with this grand regulating axiom, was always considered an alien from the blood of the Fribbles,

a vile renegade from refined taste and honorable feeling, and a disgrace to the illustriously long line of ancestry, which by dint of industry and invention, had been fished up out of the ocean of time. It was also an error of education, as well as of birth; for Fribble had been brought up to venerate his great family principle, and had been compelled to adopt it into his own conduct; and his associations, since he had become a citizen of the world had been all of a similar stamp—the *beaux* and *belles* of the fashionable world, believers of the same creed, advocates of the same doctrines. Amongst these he had imbibed still more refined ideas of the duties and occupations of a man of fashion, and very soon acquired those superficial qualifications which ranked in high life far above the higher and more splendid properties of intellectual ability.

Fribble, indeed, carried the whole of his power in his tongue, but it was at most a very harmless talent. His incorrigible cowardice prevented him from being a slanderer, ever since he had witnessed the caning of a Bond-street loungee, by a man whom he had malevolently attacked: his inveterate itch for punning, his inexhaustible fund of anecdote, and his readiness at that kind of tittle-tattle which prevails frequently where a superiority of conversation is ineffectual, rendered him a peculiar favourite with the fair sex; and to become the gossiping companion of courtezans of distinction, or of married ladies, who were more than half inclined to become such, formed the constant object of his highest ambition, and of his most unwearied attentions.

The idea of having five and forty

pounds in his pocket was the most cheering cordial he could have received. For the last five years he had never been master of half the sum at the same time; and as he walked to his second floor his head was so entirely filled with plans and conjectures as to the disposal of his money, and the effects which would probably result from it, and so inattentive was he to every thing which was passing round him, that on turning the corner of a street, he came in sudden contact with one of the guardians of the night, a being of somewhat more than three-score and ten, who was quietly coming in an opposite direction, and who by the shock he received, was thrown with no inconsiderable violence, and without ceremony into the kennel.

Fribble immediately began to apo-

logize most politely for the rudeness of which he had been guilty; but this apology produced but little effect in healing the hurts or soothing the indignant feelings of the watchman, who roughly answered him with an oath, charged him with assaulting him designedly, and springing his rattle, soon gathered round him a posse of his fellow watchmen, who most cruelly, and without enquiring into the merits of the affair, or listening to Fribble's story, dragged him to the watch-house.

This unhappy circumstance completely overthrew for the moment all the golden visions of Fribble, and set him busily to work to discern some means of extricating himself from the awkward dilemma into which his own folly had betrayed him. There was but one way of settling the

business, and this was by making a surrender of some portion of his money ; and he accordingly began to bargain with his keepers, who, instigated by the injury done to their fellow-watchman, or by motives of avarice, were for some time so exorbitant in their demands, that poor Fribble began to fear he must be contented with yielding up one fourth of his gains to satisfy the consciences of these surly wretches. After a long parley, however, the watchman who had received the hurts, expressed his willingness to forgive his assailant, on condition that he should receive a two pound note, and that another of equal value should be given amongst his companions ; and this proposition being assented to, Fribble was once again set at liberty.

No sooner did he find himself free

from restraint, than he congratulated himself upon getting through the business so easily as he had done: and as all men gather wisdom from experience, so did Fribble, during the rest of his walk, abstract his thoughts from this reflection, which had now plunged him into such a scrape, and keep his attention on the alert to prevent a recurrence of similar perplexities; waving all further cogitation upon the subject of his money speculation until he should reach his lodgings, and be able with his visions of splendor to beguile the night.

CHAP. IX.

A trip to Dover.—The situation of Kincat's mind under the impression that the affair had ended fatally for Fribble—the arrival of Steeple.—The receipt of a letter which puts an end to all anxiety respecting Fribble's situation, and creates a anxiety of another kind.—Kincat and Steeple set out for London incog.—The interview with Robert, which tends to confirm suspicions which required but little confirmation.—The travellers reach town under cover of the night.—Duel between Lord Stanza and Sir Henry.—The latter commences his design for the seduction of Sally by an artful attempt to poison her mind with jealousy—the extent of his success, and the consent of Sally to go with him to the masquerade for the purpose of removing her doubts on the subject of Kincat's infidelity.

WHILE these things were passing in London, Kincat with all the expedi-

tion which money could produce posted the road to Dover; his mind occupied during the journey with a confliction of sentiments and ideas, which rendered it a complete chaos of confusion. Firmly persuaded that the duel had ended fatally to Fribble, and that the consequence to himself must be a lingering exile, he sank into fits of despondency, which were only interrupted when the post-boys at the end of each stage called upon him and roused his attention to matters of a less important complexion. Eight hours sufficed to bring him to Dover; and although his thoughts still remained in the same disturbed state, the excessive acuteness of his feelings was considerably diminished by the little lapse of time which had taken place, and by the reflection that every mile he had travelled, removed him further from the scene of the affair in

the morning, and lessened his personal danger.

Seated alone, and in a comfortable room in the inn, Kincat set about the task of reducing the multitudinous thoughts which had confused his mind during the whole of the ride, to something like order; and the benefit of this exertion soon became apparent in the increased coherency of his actions, and the diminished wildness of his look and countenance. If Fribble really were dead, he derived consolation from the consideration that his death was of his own seeking; the provocation having been exclusively his. In accepting this challenge, he himself had only bowed to the custom of the world, which left him no alternative; and whatever the consequences may have been he did not feel himself in a moral view,

responsible for them. In point of law, indeed, he felt that he had committed an offence, and that both the letter and the spirit of the law placed him in a position of amenability for the same. Yet this liability was perpetually shunned by those who had incurred it; for without any great stretch of memory, Kincat called to mind a number of instances of individuals who had been tried as murderers, or accessaries to murder, because they had been parties to affairs of honor which had terminated unfortunately. In all these cases, however, a verdict of acquittal had uniformly been the result, and he saw no reason to apprehend any effect of an opposite nature in the case of himself.

Supposing, however, that any attempt should be made to institute a malignant prosecution against him, he had

now the means of escape within his own power, since a few hours would suffice to place him out of the reach of the vigilance of even persecution itself. He determined, however, to await the result of Captain Steeple's arrival, before he came to any resolution which might affect the regulation of his future conduct: and here the image of Sally naturally presented itself to his view, and fancy represented her in a state of the most agonizing distress, as soon as she heard of the imminent danger which he had just escaped, and the not inconsiderable peril to which he was now exposed.

Feeling, however, that circumstances would not allow him at the present moment to make her the companion of his exile, he came to the determination to write to her a full explanation of

his situation and his views respecting her, to convey to her the track he meant to pursue, and to leave behind him his trusty valet, for the purpose of escorting Sally to join him on the continent, by as speedy a route as her situation would allow her to adopt.

Kincat had just acted upon this resolution, and had written the requisite letter to Sally, conveying to her the necessary information, when Captain Steeple arrived, and put him in possession of all the particulars of his interview with Sally, and of the manner in which she had received the account of the termination of the affair of honor, and of the step which Kincat had found it expedient to pursue in consequence of its supposed unhappy catastrophe.

“ She feels acutely,” said Kincat,—
“ but the directions for her speedy re-joining me, which are contained in this letter, and which I mean to send to her by Robert, I have no doubt will have the effect of completely tranquillizing her mind, and imparting to her sufficient strength to enable her to undertake so long and sudden a journey. I am confident in the sincerity and constancy of her attachment, and feel that she will meet all perils to reach me. As to myself, all spots of earth are alike to me: the world is my home. But prithee, Steeple, what is thy plan? Hast thou in contemplation to take thy Sophy for a continental trip, if such is to be our fate; or hast thou been satiated with her?”

“ Why in honest truth, my dear Kincat,” replied Steeple—“ I am not the

most constant or consistent fellow in the world; and you will therefore not think it very strange when I assure you that I am perfectly ready to resign whenever she feels a disposition to change her protector. Your situation and mine in this respect are very different: you have an angel of your own tutoring; I a girl who has run the gauntlet through a regiment of debauchees. You are bound to your fair companion by every consideration of grateful and honorable feeling; I own no tie, no bond of obligation but my own capricious fancy! I hold you, my dear fellow, to be as completely noosed as though the hook of matrimony was through your nose, while I rove free as my native air."

Kincat made no reply, but lapsed into a reverie which continued some ten

minutes, and then hastily inquiring if Steeple had any letter to forward to town, rang the bell and gave orders to Robert to make instant preparation for journey to the metropolis.

After giving Robert the most particular instructions to lose not a moment in communicating to him the situation of Fribble, and dispatching him, Kinat felt himself somewhat restored. Hope, whose fairy fingers are perpetually tracing idol landscapes to the eye of imagination, began to cheer him with the picture of Fribble recovering from his wound, and thus opening the way for his return to Sally, pleasure and the metropolis. Then again would despondency throw a cloud over the painting, and obscure all which had pleased. Gaiety and dullness thus continued to rule in frequent alternations,

until the wine after dinner succeeded in compelling dullness to relinquish her seat, and leave the empire of Kincat's bosom to that joy which springs from hope and expectation.

Kincat had calculated upon Robert's reaching London before Sally would be stirring on the following morning, so as to be able to send him a packet in the course of the day, which he had particularly instructed him to do. The expectation of this arrival so completely unhinged Kincat, that he could neither eat, drink, nor sit in his chair; and when about nine o'clock in the evening, a sealed packet was delivered to him, which had been enclosed in an envelope to the landlord of the inn, his impatience was so great, that he could not wait to open it, but tearing off the cover, he opened the first letter, which was

from Sally, assuring him that Fribble had received no injury, and intreating that he would return to her without delay. Mention was also made of the visit of Sir Henry, and of the manner in which he had to the satisfaction of the ladies, acquitted himself of any share in bringing about the affair which had driven his friend Kincat away from town, and Sally concluded her epistle with an earnest declaration that she should feel no happiness until his return.

“There is something mysterious in the behaviour of this Sir Henry Priapus,” said Kincat, as soon as he had exchanged congratulations with Steeple upon the termination of their exile—“I believe him to be capable of any designs which his ingenuity or the ingenuity of others can suggest to him.

‘That this duel originated with him I have not a moment’s hesitation to believe, notwithstanding the pains he has taken to shuffle off the obloquy of the affair from his own shoulders: and I fear he has not taken this trouble without some object.’

“ Perhaps the letter of Robert may throw some light upon the business, for I am inclined to concur in your suspicions with regard to the scheming disposition of Sir Henry !” Thus Steeple replied, and Kincat instantly opened Robert’s epistle, and read as follows :—

“ Honored Sir—I lost no time in delivering your letter to my mistress as soon as she was stirring ; and she asked a great many questions about your honor’s health and spirits, and kissed the letter with such eagerness as it

almost made my eyes water to behold. She promised to write an answer in an hour, and I left her; but as I was going along the passage to find somebody who could tell me whether Mr. Fribble was quite dead or only dying, who should I see, your honor, but the very Mr. Fribble himself, walking, arm-in-arm just before me, with Sir Henry Priapus. At first I thought it might be the gentleman's ghost, come to take a look at his old friends, and I began to feel a bit alarmed; but I followed them very closely down the street, and watched them into a shabby coffee-house. I was determined to be sure it was Mr. Fribble himself, so I went into the same place, and got into the next box without being seen by them, and there I overheard such a conversation as I dare not put down upon paper for fear of my life. It all

concerned your honor and my dear mistress, and it made my blood run cold to hear what is going forward. Do pray, my dear master, be at home before Tuesday, if you value my mistress's or your own honor. From your faithful valet,

ROBERT TRUSTY."

"The infernal villains!" exclaimed Kincat—"But they shall not go unpunished! I will away this moment, and call them both to a severe account. It is clear that Fribble's fall without a wound was previously arranged in order to get me out of the way, that the wretch Sir Henry might have the whole field to himself. Thou disgrace to rank, thou mildew upon the baronetage of thy country, prepare to give me a severe account! Come, Steeple, let us be gone to night, and surprize them with the day-break."

Steeple made no immediate answer, but after appearing to turn the subject over in his mind for a few seconds, he replied—"my dear friend, haste and rashness in a matter of this consequence ought to be avoided. Let us deliberate well before we proceed, lest we should commit those errors, which by depriving us of the means of full detection, would rob us at the same time, of our revenge. The better way will be for us to ponder on the subject, and after consulting our pillows to night, to communicate the result to each other in the morning. We can then go to town with some settled plan, which will give us the whip-hand of the rascals, and enable us to pay them off with interest. Besides, what would it avail us to be there two or three hours before any one would be stirring?"

Kincat was at first very loth to come into Steeple's opinion; but after an hour's argument he gave a reluctant consent to remain another night at Dover, and to postpone the further discussion of the subject until they should meet at the breakfast table.

The night which intervened was the most tedious that Kincat ever passed. The plot of Sir Henry and Fribble took such full possession of his whole mind as to exclude every other consideration: to sleep was impossible; there was a continual war of passions in his soul which effectually banished soft repose, and converted the downy bed into a couch of care. One moment he resolved to call out Sir Henry and Fribble in succession: the next instant this sort of satisfaction appeared poor

and equivocal. Now he determined to adopt a more summary mode of revenge, and immediately afterwards rejected it again as dishonorable and unmanly. Now he vowed to waylay both the rascals, and to reduce them to a state which would effectually disqualify them for any new plots and schemes against female honor; and then again his feelings revolted from a method, which although it would produce injury sufficient to the offenders, could contribute but little to the credit of the offended.

Morning beamed through the windows of Kincat's apartment before he had either tasted repose, or satisfied his mind by any plausible project of vengeance. The hint thrown out by Steeple, that it was necessary to obtain the most unequivocal proof before he could be justified in seeking full re-

venge, had acted as an obstacle to all the suggestions of his wounded honor, and had so completely pozed him, that when he appeared at breakfast he candidly confessed his complete inadequacy to strike out any mode of conduct, which at the same time that it would guide him to a proper development of all the circumstances of the treachery which was meditated against him, would also put him in possession of the means and the opportunities of taking revenge.

“ I have a plan,” quoth Steeple, “ of the success of which I am so confident, that I would bet a hundred to one, if you leave the matter to me, that I will fish out the whole affair, and provide you the means of revenge. We must both repair to London *incog*, taking care to prevent any possibility of dis-

covering us. There we can watch these plotting gentlemen, and with the help of Robert, who is pretty zealous in the cause, I have no doubt we shall very soon be able to bring this great accusation completely home to them."

Kincat declared that there could be no harm in adopting the suggestion of Steeple, and thought it possible that a disguise might give them an opportunity of discovering that which, under any other circumstances, they might find it impracticable to explore. It was therefore determined upon the instant, to stay one stage out of London until the darkness of the night should effectually cover their persons from observation, and to proceed to some private lodgings, which they left it to the sagacity of Robert to prepare.

A letter was immediately dispatched to Robert, desiring him to make the requisite arrangements; and this letter was sent by an express, so that it was calculated he would receive it by six o'clock in the evening, and would be able to procure lodgings, and give them the meeting at an appointed place about five miles from town by ten o'clock. Having sent off this letter, the two travellers immediately entered a post chaise, and by seven o'clock in the evening, were set down at the place fixed upon for the meeting.

The anxiety which Kincat felt to see Robert was not long before it received full gratification. By eight o'clock the faithful fellow joined his master, and his countenance plainly enough expressed the joy which warmed his heart when he saw that it was indeed Kincat who

had arrived to protect his mistress. "Your honor has not lost much time," said he; "and I thought when your honor read my letter that you would not be long before you were here amongst us. My mistress will be so happy to see you!"

"But what is all this dreadful business you have to tell me?" asked Kincat—"Let me hear it at once, that I may make such arrangements to defeat any attempts which may be aimed at my honor and happiness as may appear to me most expedient."

"I will tell your honor," quoth Robert. "My letter informed your honor that I seated myself in the coffee house, close to Sir Henry and Mr. Fribble, with only a thin partition of board between us, so that, although they spoke

in a comparatively low tone of voice, I could catch every single word they uttered. "She is an angel," said Sir Henry, "and I don't care how much I spend to enjoy her."—"That's liberally said, Sir Henry," answered Mr. Fribble, "and the masquerade on Monday evening will be just the thing for us, if you can but prevail upon her to go there for the purpose of witnessing Kincat's infidelity."—"But in order to crown the scheme with complete success," said Sir Henry—"it will be necessary to procure some man whose size and figure will suit Kincat's, or we may stand a chance to be blown in the midst of our manœuvres."—"Nothing in the world can be more easy," replied Fribble. "I know a dozen fellows who are his perfect fac-similes, and I'll engage to find one so well qualified to play his part, that even the keen eyes of Sally

herself shall not be able to detect him.” —“ So far, so good,” replied Sir Henry; “ and I myself will take care to procure a dashing *belle* to play with him, and the deuce is in it if we don’t succeed in convincing Sally that her Kincat, her dear and constant swain, as she supposes him to be, possesses all the usual frailties of his sex.” —“ And that done,” quoth Fribble rubbing his hands, “ she is yours to a certainty; and I shall be amply revenged on Mr. Kincat for singeing my neckcloth, and phlebotomizing me in the neck with his d—d pistol-bullet.” —This is all, your honor, that I could pick up, for at that moment the two conspirators were joined by a third person, and the conversation took a different turn.”

“ I’ll be before-hand with the rascals, I warrant them,” cried Kincat, rising

from his chair, and walking across the room in violent agitation ; “ but tell me, Robert, is this all you know, and have you taken lodgings where we shall be private ? ”

“ The snuggest place in London, your honor,” said Robert ; “ where you may be as secret, as in one of the coal pits on Tanfield Moor. But as I was going to tell your honor ; just after I got your letter this evening, I met Richard, Sir Henry’s valet, and Richard and I, your honor, were born in the same village, and of course we have a smattering of friendship for one another ; for many is the good day, your honor, when we have trudged from day-break to night-fall to gather weed on the sea-rock ; and many is the night, your honor, when we have slept on the barren fell, after wandering till we had

spent our strength, and exhausted all our little stock of eatables; and many is the time, your honor—

“ And what the devil has this got to do with what you and Richard talked about?” cried Kincat, who had listened till his patience was exhausted; “ What matter is it to me where you used to go, or how you became acquainted? Don’t plague me about your sea-rock, and your sea-weed; but, prithee come to the point, and let me hear what secrets your intimacy with Richard enabled you to extort from him, in which my interests are at all implicated.”

“ I beg your honor’s pardon a thousand times,” replied Robert,—“ but when I do remember my boyish days, I can’t help letting my foolish tongue run more than I ought; but as I was

going to tell your honor, Richard said to me, "Why, Robert, how is it that you are here? I thought you had been with your master!"—"No, Richard," says I, "I'm here, and my master is yonder.—But how is it, Richard, that your master and Mr. Fribble are so thick; I'm afraid there's some mischief brewing between them?" and when I said this, your honor, Richard looked at me very earnestly for a little bit, before he said a single word to me, and then, says he, "Why, Robert, between you and me, I think you are a witch or the devil; for egad you have hit it. There they sit both together, hour after hour, plotting and conspiring, and making mischievous schemes; and when all comes out, Robert, there will be fine cutting of throats, or else never say I am a valet of sagacity again."—"You amaze me, Richard," says I; "But

pray against whom is all this mischief intended?"—"What then you have not wit enough to find that out, Robert?" says he.—"I have a shrewd guess," says I, "that it is all levelled against my master and mistress."—"So have I," says he. "But mum, Robert; you and I are old friends, and we must not blab to hurt one another. The simple truth is this, my master Sir Henry has fallen violently in love with your mistress, and swears to obtain her, let the danger be never so great; and I have a notion he is feeing Mr. Fribble pretty handsomely to assist him with all his ability, for that gentleman is always at his elbow, and is continually spouting his praises."—"Aye, Richard," says I—"and that duel this morning seems to me to be a queerish piece of business, for what the devil could induce Mr. Fribble to fall without receiving

any wound?" Richard shook his head very significantly, and replied—"Yes, there was some management there, or I am much mistaken. To tell you the truth, Robert, I don't much like my present service, for I have seen so many tricks of Sir Henry's, that I am pretty well tired of him." And then your honor, Richard began to tell me a long story about the baronet's behaviour in some great charity school for females; into which by dint of bribery, he got himself introduced without being detected, until he had committed much mischief amongst the pupils, and materially injured the reputation of the school. He was obliged, it seems, to come down pretty handsomely to avoid a prosecution with which he was threatened for this frolic; and one would have expected that this circumstance would have sickened him of such conduct in future. It does

not seem, however, to have produced such an effect, for, as Richard declared, his master was never happy unless he was continually getting into similar scrapes; for he could never suffer a handsome female---

“ But did he tell you nothing more ? ” interrupted Kincat,---“ Nothing more respecting Sir Henry’s design against me ? The history of his pranks is of very little interest to me, only as far as they are likely to interfere with my personal happiness.”

Robert replied in the negative; and the conversation upon this subject was changed by Kincat desiring his valet to order a chaise, to convey them to London, for the night was now completely dark, and there was no danger of their being recognized. In less than an hour,

the party was set down at the lodgings which Robert had provided for them, in a bye street, in the vicinity of Oxford street, not above a hundred and fifty yards from Fladong's. It was now scarce ten o'clock, and Kincat's anxiety to see Sally was so great as to endanger the plan of secrecy which had been arranged, and hitherto acted upon. The interference of Steeple, however, prevented the blowing of their plan before it reached maturity; and at his solicitation, Kincat satisfied himself with sending Robert to know what was passing.

About eleven o'clock, Robert returned from the hotel, bringing a singular account of the matters which were transacting there. Lord Stanza had called upon Sir Henry in the course of the evening, and had been closetted with

him about half an hour, at the conclusion of which time, his lordship went away, apparently in a most tremendous passion, and was almost immediately followed by Sir Henry; whom Robert met returning to the hotel as he himself entered it, with his left arm in a sling, his face pale with anxiety or with anguish, and with every other symptom of a man who was labouring under the influence of some violent emotion. Anxious to ascertain the cause of the baronet's extraordinary appearance, Robert immediately sought out his friend Richard, from whom he gathered, under the promise of the most inviolable secrecy, that Lord Stanza having heard of the sudden departure of his friend Kincat, had called upon Sir Henry for an explanation of the cause. In the warmth of conversation his lordship took occasion to speak very highly of Kincat, and to

throw a sort of insinuation against the courage and the motives of Fribble. Fribble said not a syllable in his own defence, but bore the whole weight of contumelious reproach with philosophical fortitude. Sir Henry, however, conceiving that some allusions thrown out by his lordship were levelled at himself, retorted in rather hasty, and ill-judged expressions: a violent altercation ensued, and a challenge immediately to adjourn and settle their differences was given by Lord Stanza, who instantly led the way to a place agreed upon at the moment, whither he was promptly followed by Sir Henry. A case of pistols was discharged, the consequence of which was the baronet received a wound in the fleshy part of the left arm; after which, the parties separated, fully satisfied with each other. Sir Henry, it appeared, was particularly

anxious to prevent the affair from getting wind, but the abrupt departure of Lord Stanza and himself from the hotel, and his return alone, and wounded, induced a suspicion sufficiently strong to counteract all his cautiousness. Independent of this circumstance, however, the loquacity of Fribble alone would have been sufficient to prevent the matter from being a secret, for no sooner was he satisfied that Sir Henry was clear out of the house, than he posted off to every individual in the hotel, declaring that Lord Stanza had come there on purpose to depreciate his courage, and the baronet's motives; and that the consequence was a duel, which he had no doubt would terminate fatally to one or both parties. These were all the particulars which Robert could collect; for as to the affair of the masquerade, Richard declared that he knew

nothing about it, and of course could not give him any information.

“ And your mistress, Robert, your mistress,” said Kincat—“ what news of your mistress ? I hope nothing has happened to her ? Did you see her ? Did you tell her any thing ? Does she suspect I am now in London ? ”

“ Not a word about it, your honor ! ” replied Robert ;—“ she can’t suspect any such thing ; but she is expecting to hear from you, or to see you to-morrow morning ; and I will not answer for the consequences if she is disappointed.”

Kincat made no reply, but dismissing his valet with a strict injunction to secrecy, entered on a discussion with Steeple, as to the propriety of making themselves known, at least to Sally, and

relying on her honor and affection to himself, for the sacredness of the deposit. Steeple, although he contended that it was impossible for any woman to keep a secret, and smiled at the idea of trusting a female with matters of importance, as a circumstance of choice, admitted that as a question of expediency, the suggestion was entitled to consideration. Her privity to the scheme might be the means of putting them into possession of many facts and much information, which may prove essentially serviceable in the progress of their plans. Hitherto they had acquired but very imperfect matter to go upon: for although their eyes were open to the plot at the masquerade, as far as it respected its outline, they had still to learn the characters in which those were to appear, to whom the con-

summation of the conspiracy was entrusted.

After some argument, therefore, it was determined that a note should be sent to Sally, early on the following morning, making her acquainted with the return of Kincat, and informing her, that motives of a very important nature prevented him from coming to the hotel, lest he might be discovered prematurely, and thus be thwarted in the great object of his present pursuit.

In the mean time Sally, although she constantly resisted every invitation and attempt of Sophy to go out, could not, without too glaring a breach of good manners, refuse to receive the visits of Sir Henry, who, from the most disagreeable man in the whole world had sud-

denly metamorphosed himself into a perfectly well bred gentleman. His change, however, merely extended to his manners; for his soul was still the same, unchanged in its design against the happiness of Sally. In pursuance of the plan he had laid down for his own conduct, he embraced every moment of opportunity to whisper in the ears of Sally something prejudicial to the character of Kincat. The first time he received a severe check, which might have deterred a less determined assailant; but still persevering in his object with the utmost discomposure he returned to the charge, and having caught her alone, made a most vigorous attack upon her credulity, hazarding every hope at once.

“How blest, madam,” began the wary seducer, — “how doubly blest

ought that man to be who can call such happiness his own as that of being united to such excellence as yours! How perfidious he who would be unfaithful it!”

“There is but one individual, Sir Henry,” replied the blushing girl in a voice of some dignity—“from whom I wish to receive the language of compliment; and he I am sure is too honorably attached to me to shew any perfidiousness!”

Sir Henry sighed deeply, and assuming a countenance of seriousness exclaimed—“Ah, madam, the very best of us, are frail. I would not make you unhappy: but, madam, there is no man who is not liable to error, and I should be uncommonly sorry to be obliged to shake the confidence of so interesting

and unsuspecting a personage. But I am sorry to understand that Kincat does not possess that elevated mind in which you may place an unlimited confidence !”

“ Beware, Sir Henry,” exclaimed the agitated girl, in whose feelings indignation was the most prominent at the calumny thus thrown out against Kincat—“ Beware how you slander one so dear to me, or how you endeavour to destroy a confidence which is the only foundation and guarantee of my earthly happiness. You know that your insinuation has no foundation ! You know him to be incapable of treachery to his Sally !”

“ Would to heaven I did not know the contrary !” exclaimed Sir Henry, pretending to feel an acuteness of sor-

row which was foreign to his heart—
“ Would to heaven I had no proofs that he is no longer attached to you ? ”

Sufficient had been said to create a vast fund of misery in the bosom of Sally ; and in a moment it flashed across her mind that the departure of Kincat was merely a pretext to get rid of one who was now become a burden to him. Recovering herself, however, from the gripe of despondency under which she sank awhile, she demanded of Sir Henry in an accent of blended grief, anger, and surprize--“ Proofs, Sir Henry ? What proofs can you have ? ”

“ Madam,” replied Sir Henry, who was happy to see his plan take effect so much to his satisfaction--“ there will be a masquerade on Monday evening ; and I know that Kincat has made an

assignation to meet a female there. The dresses I shall be able to learn in the course of an hour or two, and be assured every information I can give you on the subject I will; for it cuts me to the soul to see one so amiable, so accomplished, cast off by the man who has vowed to protect her."

The heart of Sally sickened within her; the colour of the rose forsook her cheeks; the lustre of happiness no longer beamed from her eye. There was a sallow sorrow upon her whole countenance, scarcely dark enough to be denominated despair, yet too dark to suffer the cheerful beam of hope or joy to appear. She gasped for breath, her eyes grew dim, her lips quivered, and she had well nigh fallen to the ground, when a sudden idea rushed across her mind, that Sir Henry was the enemy of Kin-

cat, and had probably invented this slander to shake her attachment to Kincat, and thus to promote those infamous views which she believed him to entertain.

But Sir Henry talked of proofs, and had named the time and the place of this assignation, so precisely, that it was impossible to deny, at least, a degree of credit to it, and the moment she received this conviction into her bosom, she was miserable. What had she done to merit inconstancy? Her heart acquitted her of any infidelity to him even in thought. How had she merited his disdain? She had attended to all his wishes, and had anticipated all his wants; she had loved him with an enthusiasm which deserved at least a return of fidelity. Her situation too enhanced his crime. Was it possible

that under such peculiar circumstances as those which bound him to her, he could wantonly and causelessly desert her? Her heart put a direct negative upon the question; and almost unconsciously the agitated girl exclaimed, in a stammering voice—"It is impossible! I cannot, I will not, believe it!"

Sir Henry, putting on an air of coolness very different from any expression of countenance he had previously called into action, replied—"Madam, you do me wrong to cast such an imputation upon my verity. I have also been to blame to sound in your ears a truth of such a very unpleasant description. But if I have told you any falsehood, madam, I am open to detection; and you have the means of detecting and exposing me within your own grasp!"

There was something so convincing in the tone and terms of this answer, that Sally, with all her disposition to believe Kincat honest and true to her, felt her incredulity completely shaken. She could not believe, for a moment, that Sir Henry would thus, of his own accord, run into such an awful responsibility on light authority, or court detection and exposure, unless they were both out of reach of harming him. Yet so it was, if Kincat were true; and if Kincat were not true—the idea was too much for her fortitude to endure, and she fainted in her chair, while Sir Henry, without seeking any assistance from the servants of the hotel, busied himself in working her restoration.

In a few minutes the poor girl shewed symptoms of recovery, but she

had almost relapsed, when she found herself supported in the arms of the man whom she had reason to hate so cordially. Sir Henry had anticipated her anger and surprize, and hastened to meet and repel the first fierceness of her feelings, by exclaiming, in a submissive tone—"How can I ever atone for the misery I have by one incautious and officious avowal created. Pardon me, madam, and let us hope that I have been deceived. I do not believe it possible that Kincat can be untrue to you. I know him to be faithful in friendship; he must be constant in love! He cannot have been perfidious!"

Sally was inclined to bless him for the doubt, but as she turned her eyes upon his countenance, she read a licentiousness in his eyes which repelled the inclination, and rendered her still more

suspicious than ever of the motives by which he had been actuated in making this unmasked communication to her. Summoning up all her courage, therefore, which she considered to be highly necessary at such a moment, she exclaimed—"You spoke of a mode of ascertaining it—what is it?"

"One, madam, which your delicacy will prevent you from adopting:" answered Sir Henry—"the masquerade is public: I could give you the description of the persons, dresses, &c.; nay, I will do more, I will lead you to the very spot."

"Enough, enough!" exclaimed Sally, in a tone which sufficiently betrayed the agitation of her soul—"It is—it must be too true, and I am most wretched!" As she said this she seemed

to lapse into an awful reverie, during which Sir Henry had ample opportunity to contemplate her beauty, and he instantly came to the determination that his eyes had never before seen a form half so lovely. While he was yet gazing, however, Sally recovered herself, and looking wildly on the baronet, exclaimed — “ I will see it myself. With my own eyes, I will behold his infidelity : and if he really be so base as you have described him to be, I can then die ! Will you conduct me to this masquerade, Sir Henry ? ”

Sir Henry, with an emotion of rapture which he had much difficulty to suppress, gave his ready consent, and had just promised to provide the necessary dresses for the occasion, when the entrance of Sophy put an end to the conversation.

CHAP. X.

Cross purposes—Sophy and Sally at loggerheads—Sophy determines on revenge—Robert makes a blunder which gives her the opportunity—Kincat's letter falls into her hands—Her plan to injure Sally in his good opinion—The interview between Kincat and Sophy—Kincat's anguish at the discovery of the alledged infidelity of Sally—Sophy accidentally meets Fribble at the moment when she most needs him, and obtains from him some information which she turns to the advantage of her scheme, and by means of it dissipates from Kincat's mind certain doubts of her veracity which had taken possession of it.—Situation of Sally—She also entertains doubts of the truth of Sir Henry, and by accident gets hold of Kincat's letter to her.

SIR HENRY had taken his leave in a few minutes after Sophy had entered

the room ; but not before the latter had perceived an evident embarrassment in his manner, which she began to couple with the visible alteration which had taken place in Sally's countenance ; and she felt persuaded in her own mind that something of an extraordinary nature must have taken place to bring about this reciprocal confusion. To discover what this something was, seemed an object well deserving the utmost exertions of her ingenuity. It could not be that any thing criminal had taken place, between the baronet and Sally : yet they were *tête à tête*, and, as Sophy was well aware, had been so for nearly half an hour ; and that at her sudden entrance there should be such evident marks of confusion upon the countenances of both : --- these circumstances she combined in her own mind, and being disposed to judge of others by her-

self, she began to think there must be something amiss.

The only difficulty was to discover what had actually taken place, and this indeed appeared to be a difficulty of no common description, for there was an evident indisposition on the part of Sally to enter into conversation, which was very ill-calculated to promote the views of Sophy. She was determined, however, not to be easily diverted from her object: summoning, therefore, more than her ordinary assurance to her aid, she brought the question at once home to the agitated girl—"what could be the cause of Sir Henry's, and her confusion?"

Sally was far from suspecting that her companion entertained any sentiments in the slightest degree tending to

her disadvantage, and being too much engaged with her own thoughts and doubts and fears to pay much attention to the manner of her interrogator, she did not notice the equivocal tone in which the question was put to her, nor the arch look which accompanied it. A pause succeeded the inquiry; for Sally, at the instant her unsuspecting bosom was on the point of communicating its burden of grief to another, recollected, that she had, as yet, no certain testimony of the infidelity of Kincat, and to expose such a circumstance as that which agitated her feelings, upon insufficient authority, would only be to hold up herself to the ridicule of an unfeeling world; and to incur to Kincat an odium which, it might hereafter appear, he had not merited. She resolved, therefore, to lay a restraint upon her confidence, and to make some

slight excuse for her embarrassment---
“ I have heard some news,” said she—
“ which has thrown me into a momentary distress !”

“ And Sir Henry was the messenger ; and the poor Mercury seemed to be fully as much distressed about it as yourself !” There was a singularity in the mode of expression which marked Sally’s reply, which could not fail to rouse the attention of Sally, even had she been still more engrossed by her private sorrows than she actually was. She started, looked at Sophy for a few moments with an expression of astonishment, mingled with something like anger, and then relapsed into her reverie ; from which she was effectually roused by a speedy rejoinder of Sophy. “ Really, my dear girl, this Sir Henry seems to have made a wonderful progress

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in your confidence, considering that a very few hours ago he was your utter aversion. May I solicit an equal share?"

Sally was thrown into such confusion and perplexity by the strangeness of Sophy's manner, and the obvious bearing of her interrogatory, that she could merely reply, "Indeed, indeed you wrong me, if you suppose I have placed any confidence in Sir Henry. It is true, Sir Henry has brought me some unpleasant intelligence, which if I do not immediately impart to you, you must not attribute to a want of confidence on my part, but to a desire of avoiding an exposure which must afflict me without gratifying you."

"Yes, yes; that's a very pretty way of getting out of it," returned Sophy. "To be sure if you do not chuse to

entrust me with your secrets, I can have no business to pry into them: but I do assure you that every body notices the difference in your behaviour to Sir Henry Priapus within the last two days; and the world will talk if you give it a handle. And to say truth, I begin to think that every body does not say the same thing without there being a little foundation for their remarks."

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Sally in an agony of grief which forced the tears from her eyes. "You surely do not mean to impeach my fidelity to Kincat? You cannot think me that degraded wretch who would carry her affections in her hand and bestow them on every libertine that asks? I am unfortunate, but not so sunk in criminal sensuality as your insinuation seems to imply. I have erred, it is true, and I feel my

error ; but surely my error is not one past human forgiveness."

" Lord bless my soul ! What a fuss about nothing !" cried Sophy—" Why my dear girl, who that has three grains of common sense, would think of calling it a degradation that you should listen to the conversation of a handsome fellow, like Sir Henry ? And then, as to your fidelity to Mr. Kincat ; why I did not mean to intimate that you would not be faithful to him ; and if you were not, I do not see the mighty harm of the thing ! I'll warrant me, he has enjoyed himself without scruple in that way, like other men."

Sally started. " What say you ?" exclaimed she, in a tone of abruptness—" Have you heard any thing ? Do you know him to be false ? If so, for hea-

ven's sake do not keep me in suspense, but tell me all about it. I am distracted with my apprehensions !”

“ There now,” returned Sophy—
“ Did I say the man was false, or that I had heard any thing of the kind ? I suppose he is like all the rest of his sex eternally running after pleasure, wherever he may be. And if so, why should you care a rush ? You ought to follow his example, and enjoy life while you can. Do you think I put myself in a stew about Steeple ? Not I, indeed ! He is perfectly at liberty to carry his love where he pleases ; I shall never give myself a moment's concern on that subject.”

“ You and I think differently, madam,” answered Sally, with a stiffness of manner which was very unusual to

her. " And since you take upon yourself to throw out insinuations against my dear Kincat without any better authority than your own surmises, I shall retire to my bed room that I may avoid hearing accusations, the only object of which must be to render me miserable, but the only effect of which will be to rouse my displeasure. I must request of you to excuse me!"

As Sally said this, she burst into tears and left the room, while Sophy sat for a few minutes debating within herself whether she should submit to that treatment or resent it; for she was not gifted with any of that pure sensibility of feeling which could excite in her own breast a sensation of grief, when she was conscious that she had wounded another. Her disposition, at this instant, prompted her to revenge, but she saw

no opportunity of giving it effect. While she was still, however, pondering what measure to pursue, Robert entered the apartment with the letter for his mistress which Kincat had dispatched to her. "She is in her bedroom," said Sophy; "but you may leave it with me; I am going to her, and will deliver it immediately if it be of any consequence."

Robert made no hesitation to deliver the note to Sophy, with a request that she would lose no time in conveying it to his mistress, as it was of importance that she should be immediately made acquainted with its contents. No sooner, however, had Robert left the room before the idea suggested itself to Sophy, that by means of this letter she should be able to compass the revenge which she so ardently desired. She felt a convic-

tion that it was from Sir Henry, and had no doubt it would develope some facts of which she might avail herself to make the haughty Sally repent that she had conducted herself towards her in such a manner as to excite her enmity; conscience offered no opposition, and in a few moments, Sophy had mustered courage to break the seal.

A cursory glance was sufficient to shew that Sir Henry had nothing to do with the letter, and her hopes of revenge were for an instant clouded. It seldom occurs, however, that a single disappointment mars a woman's ingenuity. She had derived from this letter the information that Kincat was in town, and that for some purpose or other, he was to remain *in cog*. She instantly began to tax her invention to turn this circumstance to advantage; and the

first resolution she formed was to go without delay, to the place of Kincat's concealment, and relate to him what she had seen regarding Sir Henry and Sally, with a view to awaken his jealousy, and thus for the momentary rebuff she had received, to retaliate upon Sally a most severe and unmerited vengeance.

The resolutions of such a woman as Sophy were seldom delayed in their execution. Without giving herself time to consider either the nature of the step she had resolved upon, or the extent of consequences which might, and probably would result from it, she instantly put on her bonnet and shawl, and posted away from the hotel to the residence of Kincat, straining her ingenuity as she walked along to make the tale, with which she intended to

accost him, as plausible as she possibly could.

Kincat was sitting by himself when Lady was announced; and naturally inferring that his visitor could be none other than Sally herself, he advanced with open arms to meet her at the door, but involuntarily shrunk back on beholding Sophy.

“Gracious heaven!” exclaimed he, clasping his hands together, in a paroxysm of alarm and amazement—“Is Sally ill, that she comes not herself to welcome my return? Why did she show this contempt of my wishes, and betray my arrival, and abode?”

Sophy was a little perplexed how to act, and a little mortified at the coolness of her reception; but it was too

late to retreat: putting on therefore, as good a face and assurance as possible, she replied—"sir, it was by an accident that I became acquainted with the circumstances which you wished to keep secret, and it is my regard for your happiness and honor which has prompted me to intrude myself into your presence. I cannot see you wronged, good and confiding as you are, without feeling anguish!"

Kincat stared with astonishment—"See me wronged?" echoed he at length—"What in the world is the meaning of this mysterious introduction? See me wronged, madam! Upon my honor you puzzle me! May I ask who has wronged me?"

Sophy, however, affected a little delicacy on the subject of giving an

answer to such a pointed question ; but on Kincat assuring her that her name should be held sacred, whatever consequences might occur, she stammered out—" Sir Henry Priapus !"

" The devil !" ejaculated Kincat, upon whose mind a thousand hateful ideas and suspicions immediately crowded. " Gracious God !" continued he—" am I then come too late to prevent the consummation of his infernal plot ? Alas, my poor, poor Sally, if thou hast fallen a victim to his snares, how will thy virtuous heart reproach thee, and sting thee with an anguish of the bitterest description ? Curses on the wretch, let me find him, and I will compel him to render me a bitter account !"

It was not Sophy's wish to bring

about a duel, since that might lead to explanations, the result of which would convict her of falsehood, and a desire to ruin the happiness of both Kincat and Sally. Her malevolence was aimed exclusively at Sally, and she began now to repent that she had made use of the name of Sir Henry at all, in the business.—“ My dear sir,” said she, laying her hand upon the arm of Kincat—“ do not put yourself into such a tremendous fury, until you have had time to convince yourself that I am not deceived. If blame can attach to Sir Henry, I am sure she is entitled to her full share of it, for I declare she seemed to be as well contented with him, as he was with her, when I had the honor of seeing them together.”

“ Impossible !” exclaimed Kincat ;
“ it is impossible she can have fallen so

suddenly and so completely. If she be false to me, the act is not her own; she has been the victim of force or of deep intrigue. But I will not lose a moment in investigating the business. I will instantly go to her, and to her face reproach her with base perfidiousness. And as to Sir Henry, let him look well to himself, or he will not go to bed this evening with a head on his shoulders. I will away this very moment!"

"Not quite so fast, my dear sir," replied Sophy, again making an attempt to check the exuberance of his passion. "You must be aware that your sudden return would mar the whole business. You cannot expect that any disclosures would be made to you; but if you will leave the whole management of the affair to me, and depend upon me, I will prove myself worthy of your con-

fidence. She knows nothing of your arrival : your letter accidentally fell into other hands, and I will take care to keep her so completely in the dark, that she shall not have the slightest suspicion of your being in town. A few hours may suffice to add much to my information. Will you trust me?"

" I will," replied Kincat, after a moment's pause ; " although if you convince me that Sally has been false, from that moment I shall hold your whole sex in utter contempt and abhorrence. Beware, however, not to rack me with suspense."

Sophy repeated her promise of guarding his interests with the most sacred fidelity, and left him with a promise to exert her utmost ingenuity to obtain all

the information she could, and to return to him again before evening.

Never did Kincat feel himself in such a situation of perplexity as at this moment. His mind was a complete chaos of boisterous passions. One moment he disbelieved every word which Sophy had uttered, and in his heart accused her of motives the most diabolical, and the next his suspicions painted Sally and Sir Henry colleaguings together in a base and unnatural conspiracy against his honor. Now he determined, without waiting for the return of Sophy, to throw off every kind of disguise and concealment, to go immediately to the hotel, and boldly to tax Sally with her perfidiousness, and to call Sir Henry to a severe account for his treacherous and dishonorable conduct. Now, cooled by reflection, he resolved to give

himself no trouble about one who had thus lightly treated his love, and thrown a stain upon his honor. While, however, he was in this state of incertitude of mind, wavering between two extremes of conduct, the entrance of Steeple relieved him a little from his perplexity. He had determined, previous to the appearance of his friend, to keep to himself the information he had just received; but his resolution gave way the moment he saw Steeple; and in answer to the customary salutation of the latter, "what news?" Kincat, without any hesitation or reserve, related to him the visit of Sophy, and the purport of the conversation which had passed between them.

"These women," replied Steeple, after pausing a few minutes to find a simile suitable to his purpose, "are like

eels, the moment you think you have fast hold of them, they glide from between your fingers and give you the slip. After all, however, this is a d——d queer piece of business. This same Sir Henry Priapus is a devilish dangerous companion for any man who has got a lovely girl under his protection ; and I wonder much that some fiery fellow has not given him a passport to the other world long ago. But I wonder what the plague induced Sophy to turn informer against her friend and companion : there seems to me to be something in the affair which requires investigation.”

Kincat concurred with Steeple in opinion, that Sophy must have some mysterious motive for her conduct : and this suspicion received confirmation from the recollected circumstance that

she had admitted herself to be in possession of the letter which Kincat wrote to Sally ; the obtainment of which, and the prompt adoption of the steps she had taken in consequence of its contents, implied an interest on her part of some stronger class than friendship.

Unable, however, to trace out the motives of Sophy's conduct, Kincat and Steeple agreed in the propriety of waiting patiently for Sophy's return, in the hope that the information she might bring would have a tendency to lead them to some decided opinion as to her real views and intentions, and put them in possession of the means of ascertaining what degree of credit was due to her statements, which Kincat secretly wished might prove unfounded.

In the mean time Sophy made the

best of her way to the hotel, well pleased at the success she had met with at the very outset of her scheme, and determined to put her ingenuity to help her through the project of feeding the *amateur* Kincat, unless any incidental circumstance should occur to give her any unexpected assistance. And such occurrence did actually take place. For when Sophy reached the hotel, she found there Mr. Fribble amusing himself with the newspaper.

Without entertaining the slightest idea that she could pick up any of the kind of information she required from this quarter, she determined to have a *tête-à-tête* with Mr Fribble; which she immediately commenced with—"Dear me, Mr. Fribble, would you believe it, I detected Sir Henry Priapus and Mrs. Kincat very comfortable together, and

I perceive they agree uncommonly well together. Yes, yes, I think Sir Henry has made a conquest, and Mr. Kincat must look to his lady sharply!"

Cutting three capers round the room, before he made any attempt at a reply. Fribble at length stammered forth in a tone almost unintelligible from the rapture of his feelings—"By Saint Jago, my dear madam, you give me most inexpressible delight; for if it be true as you say, Sir Henry has no occasion for my dresses and management at the masquerade on Monday evening, and I may congratulate myself upon being at least a thousand pounds richer than I was to day."

Sophy was all on the alert at the sound of the masquerade, dresses, &c. which opened to her a prospect of pick-

ing up some intelligence which might prove beneficial to her views : and determined to lose nothing for want of asking, she immediately replied—" Ah, you are a couple of deep plotters ! It was an admirable scheme ; but as Sir Henry says, fortune has smiled upon Pina without putting his ingenuity to any severe exertion ; and I dare say, Mr. Fribble, you are not displeased !"

" Never was better pleased in the whole course of my life !" exclaimed Fribble, " D-----n the masquerade ! I did not want the trouble of providing dresses, and a fac simile of Kincat, for the purpose of cheating the poor girl ! Right glad am I that she has seen her own interest, without being made the dupe of a plot which, to tell the honest truth, I never liked ; but that my necessities compelled me to agree to any

thing which would have the effect of filling my purse and bettering my prospects."

"I don't blame you a bit, Mr. Fribble," replied Sophy, patting him familiarly on the cheek---"every man is right to attend to his own interest; aye, and every woman too! And I think Sally much to be commended for accepting the offers of Sir Henry!"

"To be sure she is—to be sure she is!" exclaimed Fribble---"Well, do you know, I thought he would succeed, the moment he told me he had prevailed upon her to accompany him to the masquerade. Now they will go as they ought to go! There will be no plotting nor contriving to get her there. Well, well, it is really impossible to read some people! I thought we had got a chace which

would throw us both out ! But you see how it is : woman is woman : interest is interest !”

“ And a thousand pounds are a thousand pounds !” replied Sophy, looking archly at Fribble, as she continued—
“ Upon my honor, my dear sir, you are really fortunate to be able to dispose of your talents upon such very advantageous terms ! But do you really think that Sir Henry will take his new mistress to the masquerade, now circumstances have changed ? You know the design of taking her there, before this arrangement was completed, had a connection with your sly conspiracy !”

“ What you know all about it, eh ?” said Fribble---“ Well now I thought Sir Henry would blab ! Bless your soul, he can’t keep a secret when he gets in com-

pany with a parcel of you angelic creatures. The idea was all my own, I assure you: I was to procure the dresses--- I was to produce the man to perform the part of Kincat, and the female whom he was to court, while Sir Henry brought Sally to the spot, and made her an eye-witness of the infidelity of her supposed protector. Was not it a deep and well ordered scheme of mine? But it is all of no use now; my grand and magnificent scheme is entirely rendered nugatory! But I deserve my reward as much as though the plan had been effected. The ingenuity is precisely of the same value?"

Sophy replied in the affirmative; and having now obtained as much information as would answer her purpose, she was anxious to get rid of Fribble, in order that she might return to the lodg-

ing of Kincat, with a tale formed out of the materials she had picked up. Taking out her watch, therefore, she exclaimed—"Dear me, I am a full half hour behind my engagement with Mrs. Bluebottle! What in the world have I been dreaming about? My dear Mr. Fribble, will you accept my excuses?"

"Most certainly, my dear madam!" replied Fribble, who was equally anxious to put an end to the interview, that he might lose not a moment in seeking out Sir Henry, congratulating him upon the happy termination of his fears, and feeling his pulse as to the promised reward which was to be the recompense of his ingenious suggestion. Without hesitation, therefore, he took his hat, and with a light heart sallied forth to hold conversation with his friend the baronet.

The very moment Fribble had left the room, Sophy, whose invention had already woven a web to entangle Sally as she hoped, tripped away to Kincat, to communicate what she had prepared for his jaundiced ear. Kincat was again alone, and in anxious expectation of her arrival, in order that he might bring his hopes, doubts and fears, to some more certain conclusion than he had hitherto been able to form, and obtain some materials for the regulation of his future conduct.

“ On a matter of this importance, madam,” said he, “ it is necessary to obtain the fullest and most convincing testimony, before I can consent to give that credit to your assertions which they may probably deserve. You may have been possibly deceived; there may be appearances of guilt sufficient to create suspicion, without the existence

of guilt itself; for innocence is often placed in critical situations, where it seems to invite that distrust which its own intrinsic power of purity should always be competent to repel. Every kind of oral evidence must be received with caution; but if you will point out to me any mode by which I can convince myself of Sally's guilt, it must suffice."

It was fortunate for Sophy that she had met with Fribble, or she would have been at a loss for a satisfactory reply to this question; but her tale was ready prepared, and without the slightest hesitation she replied:—"Nothing can be more easy: there will be a masquerade on Monday evening, at which Sir Henry and herself will be present: there you may have an ample opportunity of convincing yourself that I have not led you into any error upon the subject."

This was a thunder-stroke to Kincat, who fully expected that he should have pozed Sophy ; but the bare mention of the masquerade threw him into an absolute fever, since it convinced him beyond all doubt that Sophy was indeed acquainted with some real particulars. It instantly occurred to him that Robert had completely misunderstood the coffee-house conversation respecting the enticing Sally to the masquerade, and that it was, in fact, nothing less than a concerted scheme between Sir Henry and Sally, in order to deceive the world, and the more confidently and securely to perfect their audacious designs against his honor. “ I will go to the masquerade,” said he—“ and depend upon it, if I find your words correct, I shall make an instant and terrible example of them both. But you must assist me once more, and procure me an account

of the characters and the dresses in which they are to appear."

Sophy promised to do her best to find out this circumstance ; although as she fairly admitted, the issue of the attempt must remain unknown until the effort had been made ; and when Sophy again took her leave and departed from the lodging of Kincat, she left him in a thousand times worse plight than he was in at her former visit ; for the conviction of Sally's infidelity had now taken too complete hold upon his mind to be got rid of.

While Sophy was engaged in maturing her scheme against the happiness of Sally, it may be right to return to Sally herself, who ever since Sir Henry had filled her mind with suspicions of the honor of Kincat, had never experienced

a moment's peace of mind. However disposed she felt to disbelieve the baronet, and to renew her confidence in the fidelity of her protector, she could not rise above the prejudices which had been raised in her bosom by the artful insinuations of Sir Henry himself; and the suspicion of Kincat's guilt became stronger and stronger every hour, and was confirmed in a great measure by his extraordinary silence, for which the reader may account in the most satisfactory manner. She was now completely wretched; and situated as she was, imagining herself to be without a protector or a refuge of any description, she could not help fancying that she had incurred the suspicions of the landlord, since it really was so, or she had created the idea out of her own apprehensions, that the waiters were less attentive to her commands than for-

merly, and that upon the whole she might scarcely consider herself a welcome visitor.

At the same time, Sally did not feel perfectly satisfied with herself that she had so easily consented to accompany Sir Henry Priapus to the masquerade. She began to recall to mind his notorious character, and felt a very powerful apprehension, lest all this story respecting the infidelity of Kincat, and the proof she was to receive of it at the masquerade, should at last turn out to be only a scheme to entrap her into some situation of danger. The non-arrival of any letter from Kincat, however, afforded such a strong presumptive proof of the diminution of Kincat's affection for her, that she very soon subdued all the scruples which had taken possession of her mind, and came to the resolution to

brave every danger, in order to obtain a conviction either of Kincat's guilt or innocence: for under existing circumstances, the horrors of suspense appeared to her the most dreadful she could bear.

Sir Henry, by the frequency of his visits, which were repeated almost every hour, under the pretext of communicating some new proof of Kincat's guilt, and of seizing that moment of mental indisposition to work some benefit for himself, attempted to prevent her from reflecting too much, lest by any accident she might persuade herself that there was an impropriety in accompanying him.

More than once, however, the mind of the baronet was placed in a terrible state of chagrin and apprehension, lest

a circumstance of a very different nature from any he had calculated upon, should defeat the scheme which he had formed ; and that was, the indisposition of Sally ; for the ceaseless anxiety and poignant anguish of her mind had brought on such a feverish state of body, and general disorder of the system, as now and then to cause serious alarm lest she should be placed in a situation which would for some time at least, completely remove her out of the reach of Sir Henry's designs and intrigues.

On one occasion in particular, she had worked up her feelings to a pitch which the debilitated state of her body was incapable of enduring ; and at the very moment when Sir Henry was wounding her too susceptible ear with pretended new proofs of Kincat's infide-

lity, she fell lifeless from her seat, and was conveyed to bed in a most alarming state of insensibility, which menaced her existence.

The idea that in seeking to gratify an ignoble lust, he might precipitate the unfortunate object of his desires into an untimely grave, was but ill calculated to carry repose to the bosom of Sir Henry. Libertine as he was, and callous as habit and education had made him in general to every sting of conscience, to every attack of humanity and honorable regret, there were moments when pleasure had for a while relinquished her empire over him, in which he was susceptible of the sharpest pangs of bitter remorse. That internal principle which stimulates the energy of man to noble actions, carries with it a terror to that breast where its calls are

unheeded, and its claims disallowed. Whether, however, it was the rebuke of this monitor which caused the pang in the breast of Sir Henry, or whether it was the fear that death should step in between him and his desire, and bear away his projected victim, it is certain that when the news was brought to Sir Henry of the critical situation of Sally, the most softened sinner under the severest inflictions of heaven's wrath could not have displayed a keener contention. As the danger of Sally, however, diminished, his penitential paroxysms fell in an equal proportion: and the moment he saw her again, all his bad intentions recurred in their original force, and his desire to gratify his sordid passions, at the expence of her honor and happiness, seemed to have grown keener for its momentary suspension.

Robert had conveyed to his master a correct account of Sally's confinement to her bed for a whole afternoon, in consequence of some violent emotion of mind under which she was suffering ; and it was not without immense difficulty that Steeple prevailed upon Kincat to give up the determinations which he was perpetually entering into to hasten to the hotel, and bring the event to a speedy and summary conclusion.

In the mean time Sophy was as determined and continual a visitor to Kincat as Sir Henry was to Sally. She was perpetually annoying him with proofs which he had no wish to receive, and with suggestions from which all his better feelings would shrink with horror. Their frequent repetition, however, produced an effect upon his mind,

so completely at variance with all the interests of Sally, that had not the desire of vengeance prompted him to new exertions, he would have consented, without a struggle, to banish from his heart the very image of one whom he firmly believed, from the various representations made to him, to have played him false.

Revenge, however, prompted him to investigate the matter closely, for the purpose of bringing to complete exposure and punishment those who had thus cruelly violated his piece of mind, and aimed a blow at his honor. To the masquerade, therefore, he was determined to go, accompanied by Steeple, and to canvass the giddy circle through and through, until he had succeeded in discovering the authors of his misery.

Nor was Sally a jot less anxious to detect Kincat and the female with whom he had formed his assignation, and to convince herself that Kincat had indeed thrown her upon the mercy of the world. She persuaded herself that the moment she could obtain ocular demonstration of his treachery to her, she could consent to lie down and take her farewell of life ; but she had no inclination to take this step until she was sure that Kincat was entirely lost to her. Since her dispute with Sophy, the latter had scarcely taken the least notice of her ; but the very night before the masquerade, Sophy, as though stimulated by a desire to offer some new insult to one whom she had set down as a female free and at large on the town, broke in upon her privacy. Sally was sitting in a chair by the window with her head leaning upon her hand, when her *quondam* compa-

nion tripped into the room, and, with the utmost levity of manner and tone demanded how she was? Sally, who expected nothing less than this visit, and was consequently but ill prepared to receive her, after replying to the question, pressed Sophy to take a chair, and sat with admirable patience to listen to a long train of light and uninteresting chit-chat upon the most frivolous subjects of the day. Sally, however, felt considerably relieved when Sophy took her leave after a short visit, as she was just going out into the Park ; but she had scarcely got out of sight before Sally saw a note lying upon the floor, and instantly seizing it, she glanced over the envelope, and to her great surprize and apprehension, beheld that the broken letter was addressed to no other than herself.

With the utmost impatience of manner, Sally tore open the letter, and greedily swallowed the contents from one end to the other; but no sooner did she discover that it came from Kin-cat, and that he was in the metropolis, than joy predominating over every other feeling of her bosom, she relieved her bursting heart by a deep sigh, and uttering a shriek, sank senseless on the floor of her apartment.

CHAP. XI.

Sally takes certain steps in consequence of the discovery of the letter of Kincat.—The interview and its consequences.—The arrival of Sophy, and new slanders—an interview between Sir Henry and Sally, which develops the quantum of instruction she had received from the lesson of Kincat.—Sir Henry perfectly happy in the anticipation of ousting Kincat from the heart of Sally.

SALLY upon her recovery still found herself alone; and, agitated as she was by the appearance of the letter, she had reason to congratulate herself upon her solitude, which afforded her time and opportunity to cogitate upon the ex-

traordinary nature of the circumstance of such a letter being in the possession of Sophy. For an instant, something like jealousy took possession of her mind, but casting her eyes upon the cover of the letter, and seeing it was addressed to her, in Kincat's usual manner, the suspicion rapidly subsided, and left her in a state of singular incertitude as to the means which Sophy had employed to get possession of so important and interesting a paper.

There was a mystery in this affair which she determined to spare no exertions to unravel. It was evident that there had been some clandestine artifices adopted, with a view to impede, or entirely to prevent the letter of Kincat from reaching her; and that Sophy was a party to the scheme, whatever it

might be, was clear from the circumstance of her having the letter in her possession. But what end could Sophy have in view? By what motive could she be actuated? What cause had she received to justify her in an act, the prominent tendency of which was to strike at the root of the happiness of one whom she had called her friend? Such were the questions which Sally put to herself. But she felt a much greater difficulty in finding any satisfactory replies to them. The only decided conclusion at which she could arrive was this, that there was a plot in existence levelled against her happiness, to which Sophy was privy.

After wasting nearly half an hour in a fruitless attempt to find some clue to this conspiracy, Sally roused herself from the apathy which had taken pos-

session of her, and reproaching herself bitterly for not having immediately gone to the private lodgings of Kincat, put on her hat and pelisse, and posted away, determined to find out from an interview with Kincat himself if there were any grounds for the accusations which Sir Henry had brought against him.

A very few minutes sufficed to bring Sally to Kincat's apartments. Without any announcement she rushed into the room where Steeple and her protector were sitting, and flying to Kincat with open arms invited his embrace. The latter, however, with a stiffness of manner to which Sally was altogether unaccustomed, shrunk from her proffered embrace, and exclaimed, "Madam, I am surprized that Sir Henry could at

length spare you to pay your respects to me !”

“ Sir Henry ! Gracious heaven what do I hear !” cried Sally, sinking almost in a state of insensibility into a chair which stood by her side—“ What new horror has heaven in store for me ? My dear Kincat, explain yourself. What mean you about Sir Henry ?”

“ Ask your own conscience, Sally !” returned Kincat—“ The news of your inconstancy has reached me. But what is that woman who seizes the first moment of her protector’s absence to rush into all the excesses of inconsistency and depravity ?”

Conscious of the propriety of her own conduct, and the constancy of her own affection, Sally was thunderstruck

at the charge thus made against her. Her pride, however, rose to her assistance; and assuming an air of more haughtiness than had ever before found its way into her manners, she replied, "I understand your motive, sir, too well: by making the first charge against me you hope to escape an accusation of your own conduct. But I am aware, sir, of your assignation at the masquerade. I have received too strong proofs of the insincerity of your professions of love: but why not be content with acting unfaithfully yourself, without striving to stain my honor?"

A gush of tears followed this question: while Kincat, amazed and confounded at this reciprocity of charge, felt a sudden impression come over his mind that the mysterious nature of this business was something more than acci-

dental. As Sophy had been attempting to poison his mind against Sally by direct charges of infidelity against her, so it was evident that some co-operating fiend had been successfully playing the same part with Sally. The moment this conviction entered his bosom, jealousy began to make its retreat, and after a pause of a few seconds, advancing with open arms to Sally he exclaimed, "what devil has been poisoning your mind, Sally?"

"Sir Henry Priapus!" was the only reply of Sally, sinking into the arms of Kincat; but it was sufficient to confirm all Kincat's apprehensions and suspicions. "It must be so," said he; "we have both been the dupes of a malicious artifice. This meeting, however, shall defeat all their designs, and turn the dis-

grace of the affair entirely upon themselves. But how was it that you have never made reply to my letter, or have not seen me before?"

Sally immediately informed Kincat of the accidental circumstance to which she was indebted for the possession of the letter. "Is it possible?" exclaimed Kincat, who had scarcely patience to wait until she had finished speaking—"then that artful woman has either contrived this double plot against our happiness, or she is one of the principal instruments in the hands of Sir Henry! It was her who poisoned my mind with the tale of your attachment to Sir Henry, and your treachery to me! But we must discover the end to which this scheme tended. We must devise some plan for the detection of the conspiracy,

when the discovery can be made with the most advantageous effect upon all parties."

Captain Steeple expressed his perfect readiness to join in any scheme to inflict upon Sophy, as well as Sir Henry, the punishment which they so well merited; and it was immediately concerted between the three, that Sally, who, by the way, had given a circumstantial account of Sir Henry's conduct and conversation since the affair of the duel, should suffer the baronet to indulge the hope of succeeding in all his wishes respecting her, and to conduct her to the masquerade in the character he himself had suggested to her, that of a ballad-singer, where Kincat promised to meet her in the habit of a parish beadle, attended by Steeple, in case any emergency should arise which might

render his assistance necessary to the completion of his scheme.

What that scheme was, he refrained from communicating to Sally, contenting himself with an assurance that she might rely on his presence, and declaring that he would take all the consequences upon himself if he failed to bring his plan to bear. Satisfied with this assurance, and assured that all the attempts to weaken their love for each other had originated in a vile conspiracy, Sally felt extremely happy in this interview, and as Kincat suggested the possibility of a new visit from Sophy, and the necessity of Sally keeping up appearances of a perfect ignorance of his being in town, and of remaining as much as possible at the hotel, she shortened her stay, and in a very few minutes after the explanation was finished took her departure.

There was but one circumstance in the plot which Kincat failed to comprehend, and that was the anxiety of Sophy that he should be present at the masquerade. He could not in any way reconcile this circumstance to any union of operation betwixt her and Sir Henry. This, however, he resolved to banish from his mind ; and as he had succeeded to his own satisfaction in developing the great outline of the plot, to trouble himself nothing as to its minor features.

Sally had not been long gone, before Sophy made her appearance ; and little disposed as both Kincat and Steeple were to pay much respect to her, they were constrained by motives of policy, to keep up an appearance of esteem and gratitude towards her. Little suspecting who had been there before her, Sophy

bounced into the room, and throwing herself into a chair, began the conference with a most violent philippic against her own sex, declaring that when she witnessed the base duplicity with which the best of men were treated, she was almost compelled to blush that she was a woman. "Well, well," said she--- "never mind, my dear sir, if I cannot prevent your dishonor, I will, at least, assist you to revenge it."

Although Kincat and his friend found some difficulty in keeping their tempers at this hypocritical preface, the former, after a moment's struggle, replied--- "What has occurred, madam, thus to excite your resentment against your own sex? Do not let the excessive interest you take in my happiness, lead you into injustice to so extensive and lovely a part of creation! I feel as I

ought to feel for your interference with respect to my honor, and only wait a proper opportunity to give you proof of the sincerity of that feeling !”

The ambiguous meaning of this reply was not visible to Sophy, who understanding it as the language of gratitude for her kindness, determined to perfect her claim to it on the instant. Sighing, therefore, two or three times very deeply, she resumed---“Heavens, that such a man should be so injured !” She then, after a little action well calculated to produce theatrical effect, began a tale, which it had cost her some time and trouble to invent, of Sir Henry and Sally, the substance of which was, that they had both left the hotel about three hours ago to walk into the Park---that being informed of their departure by a waiter, whom she had made her confi-

dent, she instantly took a coach and followed them---that she discharged the coach at Cumberland-gate, and keeping as much out of view as possible, traced them to one of the most unfrequented parts of the Park, where she witnessed those sort of endearing familiarities which were amply sufficient to convince her that a most excellent understanding subsisted between the parties---and that finding that she could obtain nothing more conclusive, seeing that it was impracticable for her to make such near approach, as would enable her to catch any part of the conversation, without risking a discovery of herself, she left them, and hastened to communicate the news.

“ And you have left them in the Park at this very moment?” said Steeple in an accent of interrogatory ; and look-

ing very archly and earnestly at Sophy, as he put the questions, as though he wished to ascertain to what extent the inflexibility of her countenance could be carried.

“To be sure I did,” replied she, without altering a muscle of her phiz—
“and there they are, even now, billing and cooing just like two turtle doves. I would advise you, however, not to be rash, but to remain here in quiet, and leave all the business to my management.”

“The devil!” exclaimed Kincat and Steeple, at the same moment. The ejaculation, however, neither surprized nor alarmed Sophy, who shrewdly deciding that it was merely a burst of honest indignation against a woman whom Kincat supposed to have behaved so

shamefully to him, went on to add fuel to the fire which she imagined she was heaping upon the head of the devoted Sally—"Such treachery, my dear sir, heaven will never suffer to go unpunished! But I have a strong suspicion of something more outrageous than all this, of which I shall get information in the course of the day. One thing is clear, and therefore I may state it. A lady was seen coming out of Sir Henry's bed-chamber at day-light this very morning, and his bed certainly shews the impression of two persons instead of one. I don't pretend to say who the lady was. It might be somebody I do know, or somebody I do not know. But you know, my dear sir, after all the facts I have told you, you may be able to form something like a guess at the real person, as I may do!"

Kincat was so confounded by the audacity of this woman, that really for some time he could make no kind of reply to this false and outrageous misrepresentation. A look from Steeple, however, checked him at the instant he was about to break forth into an exclamation which would certainly have betrayed the real state of his thoughts, and betrayed to Sophy the secret that her duplicity and treachery were discovered. Recovering himself shortly, he contented himself with coolly replying —“ I am amazed and confounded at the atrociousness of such conduct. Too truly has the poet described a shameless woman as the most profligate, abandoned, and in every respect the worst of human beings. Your information confirms it!”

While this conversation was going

forward at the apartments of Kincaid, Sally was at home congratulating herself upon the happy *denouement* which had just taken place, and which had once more restored her to a happy state of mind. A very few minutes, however, were allowed to her for this purpose, for before she had scarcely time to digest her thoughts, Sir Henry Priapus, availing himself of the privilege which, in the first instance, he had usurped, and which a half reluctant courtesy had subsequently established, entered the apartment *sans ceremonie*, and began, in his accustomed style of levity---“Most angelic of women, I have now concluded my arrangements in town, and am merely kept here for the purpose of accompanying you to the masquerade to-morrow evening, that you may receive from the evidence of your own eyes, the conviction of the infidelity of

Kincat. After I have served you, I have nothing more to do but to return to the country, but I trust not alone."

There was something in the look of Sir Henry, which made his meaning much too intelligible to Sally; and under any other circumstances than the present, would have excited her instant indignation. But she had received her cue from Kincat, and was bound to throw out to Sir Henry encouragement rather than the contrary. Suppressing her real sentiments, therefore, she affected an entire ignorance of his true meaning, and made answer---"I dare say you will not go alone, Sir Henry; though to be sure, much depends upon the mode in which you travel. I think I have heard you say you generally travel by the mail, and if so you are sure to meet with company. Do you know,

Sir Henry, I think nothing worse than going a long journey alone."

"Very true, madam!" returned Sir Henry, who, for the first time in his life, thought her dull of apprehension--- "Nothing is so dull as travelling alone: but that was not exactly my meaning. I shall be alone amongst a dozen, unless I am blessed with the society of——"

"Some favourite lady now, I'll be bound for you!" interrupted Sally, who, notwithstanding her lesson, was frightened to death lest he should mention her name. "You are, in truth, a most abominable rake, Sir Henry; are you not? Pray confess it!"

Sir Henry could fain have broke out into a terrible passion at this interrup-

tion ; but determined to come round to the point, and convince her of his meaning, even against her own inclination, he re-commenced---“ I am rather a lover of the female sex, if that be what you denominate raking. Though, truth to say, I have no great crimes to reproach myself with. If I have made free with ladies now and then, I was actuated by a spirit of revenge for the many injuries I have received from them.”

“ Revenge is a bad motive, Sir Henry,” answered Sally---“ It is nobler to forgive injuries than to punish them. But pray what is this mighty provocation which you have met with from them, that should require such repeated and perpetual vengeance?”

“ When I was quite a youngster, madam,” replied Sir Henry---“ My

mother had a maid who was handsome and forward. I candidly confess that I was prompted to take liberties with her, but never to any extreme. This hussey some two years afterwards had the audacity to charge me on oath with having committed a rape upon her, and by the mass, if great interest had not been made, and great sums expended, the circumstance would have cost me dear. As it was, my name and credit were damned throughout the county. Every body believed the girl, and wherever I moved I had fingers pointing and tongues wagging at me without number or modesty. At another time before I was eighteen I got my bones well nigh broken by a jealous old rascal of a tradesman, whose wife had actually laid snares against me for twelvemonths, before she succeeded in entrapping me ; and this detection and punishment over-

took me the very first time I wandered out of the path of virtue. Besides these instances, I have been in innumerable scrapes, and now carry about me many honorable scars, evidences of my prowess in the campaigns of Venus. Have I not wrongs to avenge?"

"Really, Sir Henry, to be candid with you," returned Sally, "you have some cause to regret going into those wars; but as for talking of revenge, did you ever hear a soldier use that kind of language? In all contests buffet against buffet, is the ordinary mode of warfare; and I cannot see what mighty cause you have to complain of the scars you have received from injured husbands! You should rather curse your ill fortune, which led you into such disgraceful dilemmas, and then left you to extricate yourself!"

“Your judgment is partial, madam, and I appeal against the cruelty of the decision,” replied Sir Henry—“for I maintain that vengeance is laudable. For instance, I will suppose a lady under the protection of a man who after vowing eternal love to her, and a thousand other fine things, becomes careless, and at last inconstant to her; what man of reflection or woman of spirit will condemn her, if in recompense for the injury she has received, she shall turn the tables and prove untrue to him?”

“Every one!” replied Sally, who now began to see the full drift of the baronet’s observations—“Every one would condemn, and no one pity her, if she fell the victim of her own depravity. A woman ought to preserve a love of reputation, even if the thing itself be lost. Should I who in an unhappy

hour was won from the path of rectitude, consider that I have no further character to lose? Is it for an offence, committed in the heyday of youth, and in an unguarded moment, that virtue is to be entirely discarded, and even the name of the grace treated with contempt? No. Sir Henry, no act of a man, however insulting and degrading to a woman, can be a sufficient apology for her running into the same course under the pretext of revenge!"

It was not a little thing which perplexed Sir Henry; but he really felt pained with this declaration of Sally; and as soon as he possibly could he made this reply: "My dear madam, are the men to be allowed the exclusive privilege of inconstancy? No—heaven forbid! If they become perfidious in their conduct, their perfidiousness is a sufficient

cause for the relaxation of the strict bonds of fidelity on the part of a woman. There is no proper or legitimate distinction between the privileges of the two sexes. That which is natural in the one is natural in the other: that which is criminal or laudable in the one, is criminal or laudable in the other."

"I cannot exactly perceive the drift of this argument," replied Sir Henry; "whatever it may be, however, it will be better for you to come to the point at once: it is impossible otherwise for me to know how to answer you."

"Then thus it is, angelic creature!" replied Sir Henry. "If the conduct of Kincat towards you turns out to be marked with that 'inconstancy' which is his principal failing, it appears to me

that you are fully justified in retaliating upon him for his impropriety. You have an equal right to recal or transfer your affections : and under such provoking circumstances you only display a becoming spirit and independence in so doing. Would to heaven, madam, when making a new choice, that you would allow my name to stand on the list of candidates for your favor, which none upon earth can appreciate more duly than myself."

It was impossible for Sally any longer to affect to misunderstand him. His meaning was too palpable, and his object so clear as to defy ignorance or scepticism. Still, however, recollecting the desire of Mr. Eladong, she should fan the flame rests. "I will not," she said, "rest my bosom rather than extinguish it." she replied, "Sir Henry, you are such a man of gallantry, that very few

women I believe are able to contend with you."

"Upon my word, my dear madam, you are quite a flatterer," returned Sir Henry—"but you do injustice to your own sex, when you speak of the competency of the ladies to contend with me. You yourself are an example to the contrary: for by heaven I feel myself about as competent to contend with you as Prometheus was with the vultures which cruel fate ordained to feed upon his liver."

"I am perfectly unaware of any contest between us, Sir Henry," replied Sally, "except a little opposition of words; and there you must allow the ladies ought to have the preference. You are not so ungallant as to deny this?"

“ No, fair excellence ! I’ll deny nothing that you advance,” answered the baronet. “ But tell me honestly, would it break your heart to be obliged to spend a few months in the country ? Could you exist away from London ? ”

“ Truly, Sir Henry,” replied Sally, “ yours is a singular question. With the man of my choice all places would be alike to me. The lofty mountain, the barren moor, or the untenanted vale, would teem with as many delights to me, as the crowded street, the gay theatre, or all the splendid amusements of the giddy town. Every thing depends, Sir Henry, upon the state of the heart : if that be at ease, it matters not where the footstep rambles, or the eye rests. The source of happiness is within us ; and while it remains uninjured, or the streams which flow from it are unconta-

minated, no change of time or place can affect them."

"By my soul, madam, you are quite a philosopher," returned Sir Henry—"and if you would wish to set up an academy for philosophical lectures, I will undertake that you shall have no lack of pupils. But, joking apart, my dear creature, you have most unaccountably shunned my question. Do, pray, madam, have the goodness to inform me whether you conceive the treachery of Kincat does not merit some pointed punishment? For my part, I think you will relinquish the character of a woman of spirit if you do not, without hesitation, pay the traitor off in his own coin."

Sally hesitated a moment before she replied—"Really, Sir Henry, it is impos-

sible for me to misunderstand you ; but, before we say any more upon that subject, let us see how the affair at the masquerade will terminate. If Kincat be indeed unfaithful, I will not answer for my conduct : but remember this, Sir Henry, the proof remains with you ; and if you fail, I am not bound to hold any further parley with you."

" And I will take the consequences upon myself most joyfully," replied Sir Henry. " And if I don't prove to you, my dear creature, that Kincat is as inconstant as the moon, which, as Shakespear says, " monthly changes in her circled orb," then set me down for as complete a green-horn as ever was created upon Newmarket race-ground. Believe me, madam, Kincat is one of those who imagines that Jove laughs at lovers' perjuries."

“ I will not believe it,” answered Sally, “ until I have ocular demonstration of the fact. The woman who suffers herself to be lightly prejudiced in these cases, proves herself to be utterly unworthy of the custody of a man’s affections. I understand the law of the country declares every person innocent till proved guilty ; and I should be extremely sorry to be less liberal. Prove Kincat a traitor, and I shall be disposed to copy him !”

This admission made Sir Henry as happy as he had anticipated. From this moment he saw no kind of impediment to his most sanguine wishes, but imagination painted the lovely Sally as already his own, and adding one more to the number of those whom he had ruined. His reply comprised a vast number of most ardent oaths, such as are uniformly

sworn in all similar cases, by lovers and unprincipled speculators in female beauty. Sally, in the mean time, remembered her lesson too well to interrupt the career of his love; and when at the conclusion of his rhapsody, Sir Henry caught her hand, and pressed it to his lips, she counterfeited a faint reluctance so admirably, that the baronet was absolutely beside himself with rapture at the prospect of happiness which now opened before him, and the approximation of the moment when he fancied he should most enjoy it.

“I will convey thee, sweetest of women,” said Sir Henry, “to a most delightful villa which I have recently purchased on the banks of the Thames, and which I will instantly settle upon you, with an adequate income, so as to drive from you for ever all fear of any reverse

of circumstances. Then, through the live-long day we will sit amidst artificial bowers, and tell tales of love. We shall be the envy of the world; thy beauty, my angel, shall be the burden of the ditties of the men, and my constancy the theme of admiration amongst the women. Indeed, my beloved Sally, it shall be the constant effort of my whole life to obliterate the anguish which has been created by that scoundrel Kincat"—

“Nay stop a moment, Sir Henry,” replied Sally, reddening with passion at the term which the baronet applied to the name of Kincat—“At least prove him deserving such an epithet, before you attach it to him: and allow me once for all to assure you, that you will never find the way to my affection while you continue to load with invectives

him who has ever been the sole master of my affections. I thought you had known human nature better than to require such an explanation."

"I admire you the more, my dearest creature, for that uncommon proof of your superiority over the rest of your sex," answered Sir Henry, dropping on one knee before her, and pressing her hand with rapture to his lips—"You are as much beyond the generality of women in all those virtues which ornament and elevate your sex, as the rose is above the daisy in fragrance and beauty. Heaven grant me no earthly bliss beside, but give me to dwell within the circle of this angel's smiles while I live: give me to inhale ambrosia from her lips; and to catch inspiration from her eyes! Oh, she shall be first in my thoughts when the sun dispels the

drowsy slumbers of the night ; and last when day again yields to the composing influence of the evening shadows ! She shall animate my dreams, and distil delight into all my waking visions ! I will court her image in the glassy stream : I will send her kisses on the wing of the breezy atmosphere ; and every hour and every moment shall find me weaving tendrils of happiness with which to decorate our lives ! Say, angelic creature, wilt thou credit my fond professions ? Wilt thou accept the vows of a swain, than whom none ever shewed or felt more sincere and lasting affection ?”

“ Upon my word, Sir Henry,” exclaimed Sally, who two or three times during this rhapsody had felt an almost irresistible desire to burst out into a loud laugh in the face of the baronet—
“ Upon my word, you have been in the

clouds with a vengeance ! Truth to tell, you have soared so prodigiously high, that I have been utterly unable to make my poor weak-winged comprehension keep up with you. I never heard such a pack of downright nonsense in the whole course of my life, and that is my simple opinion of the matter, Sir Henry. One word of plain English, or at least, one sentence, would to me be worth more than all your arbours, and breezes, and your fine figures of speech ! Why heaven preserve me ! Have you not made your escape from some madhouse ?”

“ If I be mad, thou severest of all critics,” replied Sir Henry—“ it is the fire from those eyes of thine which has scorched up my little portion of reason, and made me so ! Who can be rational when you are by ? Bid the insect remain unsinged and cold in the midst of

the burning cauldron! Oh, dearest creature, how is it possible that I can be cold and phlegmatic when such irresistible attraction surrounds me? Yet Kin-cat has proved inconstant to such charms; "thrice happy" had he known or been able to appreciate his happiness, but thrice miserable, now that he has thrown away the rich prize which rendered life valuable! Ah, how is it possible he could be insensible to beauty which has power more than mortal to fix and to command! Oh, fairest, most amiable of women, look with compassion on one who will perish rather than use thee ill! All my hopes of happiness are centered in thee—without thee all creation is but a blank; seasons have no changes; suns have no heat; day no cheerfulness; pleasure is neutralized; there is no charm in society; there is no relish in wine; music is discord; and amuse-

ment insipid. It is thou only who art the relish of life, and, possessing thee, I shall possess all that is estimable and delightful !”

Sally would have given much to rid herself of this sickening retailer of romantic ideas culled from all the novels and romances for three centuries, but she remembered her cue, and consented to tolerate, and even to lengthen out a conversation which was most intolerable and disgusting to her. She determined, however, to make an effort to change the conversation into a channel which would be less disagreeable to her, and with this view, she exclaimed, instead of making any kind of reply to the unmeaning rhapsody of Sir Henry —“ Apropos, baronet, have you heard of the lady who gives lectures upon animal magnetism? Do you know I

feel a prodigious curiosity to be enlightened a little upon such a very curious and new subject!"

"Behold an illustration of the principle in yourself!" returned Sir Henry, who seemed determined to bring every thing to bear upon the subject of his love to Sally, in the hope that by such perseverance he might ultimately carry his point. "You speak, and I obey! If you frown, I freeze, that is the repulsive power: if you smile, I glow and feel the attraction irresistibly. I feel no other impulse when you are by; for you are the only principle which gives me motion, life, faculty, thought, and even existence!"

Sally was absolutely ill with the vapours, and felt at this moment that she would have given any thing to be rid of

her plague: but it was in vain to try to shake him off by any other mode than that of giving himself absolute offence, for he stuck to her like a leech to his business. "Upon my word, Sir Henry," said she, smiling at the moment when her bosom was full of sorrow and antipathy—"You have a most happy knack of turning every thing to your own purpose. What in the world I can have to do with animal magnetism, except in your diseased imagination, I am at a loss to understand. But seriously, Sir Henry, for I really want to know something about it, I am told that this lady of quality can cure every disorder by merely pointing her finger at the patient. Now if this be all true, the age of miracles is certainly come again, and I shall not wonder at any thing which may occur. Pray, Sir Henry, tell me if it be so,

and whether you have heard any of her lectures, for I understand she is now giving a course upon the subject at her own residence?"

"She cures all diseases but those of the heart, angelic creature," replied Sir Henry—"But here her skill is completely baffled; or I should have been heart-whole at this moment, instead of coming with my existence in my hand to offer it at your feet. I have not attended her lectures, which I believe are principally crowded by dropsical dowagers, jaundiced old maids, and gouty fellows. Pay no credit to the tales which are told of her miraculous performances: they are all the invention of gossips and rumour bearers, and not worthy of a moment's attention. Let us converse upon subjects of a dearer in-

terest, than the lectures of old women; upon scenes of futurity teeming with extatic delights"—

“If you please,” interrupted Sally, whose patience would hold out no longer—“let us postpone every thing of the kind for the present. A little while longer, and perhaps I may be disposed to go in concert with you on such topics. For the present, I have a particular engagement which requires my immediate attention; therefore, my good baronet, leave me to myself for the present.”

Sir Henry, after indulging in another brief rhapsody, and kissing her hand two or three times, vowed he only lived to promote her pleasure, and took his leave.

After Sir Henry had left her, Sally was half inclined to load herself with reproaches for the levity of manner with which she had conducted herself towards this notorious baronet; but the moment she recollected that what she had done was undertaken with a view to satisfy Kincat, and to promote the object he had in view, of bringing Sir Henry and Sophy to that punishment which was so eminently their due. This consideration served to qualify the poignancy of her feelings, and to convince her that she had committed no fault irreconcilable with that duty which she considered herself as urging to Kincat; and this inference was coupled with the conviction, that if Sir Henry should presume upon the conversation which had just taken place, and take any unwarrantable liberties, Kincat had

sufficient affection and courage to protect her against the insults of an unprincipled seducer, and to punish the insolence which should dare to offer them.

END OF VOL. II.

